Divided Together: Traffic and Democratic Life in Bogotá

A Dissertation
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Bruce Braun

June 2017

Dedication

For Alexander,

who I can count on to remind me

by recalling our passing encounter

of the tremendous privilege of education.

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INTRODUCTION **The Problem We Live**

"Hoy uno de los mayores problemas que viven los capitalinos es la movilidad"— today one of the biggest problems that capitolites *live* is mobility. So wrote the political commentator Andrés Correa (2015, May 3) in recent column in the Bogotá blog *Las 2 Orillas*.[1] Perhaps it is just linguistic happenstance that in English one only 'faces' or 'confronts' a problem and that in Spanish one can 'live' one. Regardless, this notion of 'living' a problem that Spanish renders thinkable best describes the relationship between the traffic problem in Bogotá and its public— the reciprocally constituted central subjects of this dissertation. To 'live' a problem, in my reading of the idea, is to be engulfed in negotiation with an obstacle that presents a grave threat to one's flourishing. After a while, you no longer confront the obstacle as an external foe but rather, as with Bogotá and its traffic, the struggle curls up inside you and re-constitutes you from within. What does not kill you makes you stronger, as they say.

The mobility[2] problem in Bogotá is lived out at two scales. At the scale of the

[1] A note on translation: Unless otherwise noted, all direct quotes of Bogotanos and all quoted media—

[2] A note on 'traffic (problem)' and 'mobility (problem)' as concepts: I vacillated about which term was more appropriate to center. 'Traffic' suggests the immediacy of congestion: the bodily feeling of being crowded and immobile among honking cars, the crush of bodies on the bus, the collision between bicycle and pedestrian on a crowded sidewalk. This immediate experience is crucial to the political story I try to convey, but the term is also limiting. It suggests *only* those immediate experiences when the phenomenon I am describing could encompass all of what goes into the problem of moving in the city and all that comes out of it. 'Mobility' is the word that Bogotanos would generally use to refer this broader, very complex affair. In Bogotá you will constantly hear about "la movilidad" or "el problema de la movilidad" or, unfortunately these days, "la crisis de la movilidad." People will also talk of 'trancones': traffic jams. 'Tráfico' does exist—one could technically say "había mucho tráfico" (there was a lot traffic), but in my experience Bogotanos would say "había mucho trancón" anyway. 'Traffic', however, is the English word that makes the most sense. I resolved to use the terms interchangeably and always to mean both things: the immediate experience of commuting and the broader constellation of causes and consequences that stretches out from it.

individual, most Bogotanos must manage the grueling task of mobilizing themselves through an expansive, dense, congested and insecure city at an average of 64 minutes for a single commute (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2011). This is an experience that in Bogotá, as in most cities in the world, amounts to a tremendous mental and physical burden (Frey & Stutzer, 2008). Even though the commute is 'routine,' it does not necessarily recede from consciousness. Moreover, rather than seeking to distance themselves from it, many Bogotanos have opted to call in the problem more closely by constructing their political and professional lives around it.

At the scale of the collective, over the last 20 years public politics in Bogotá has focused intensely on making 10+ million Bogotanos move more securely, fluidly, efficiently and sustainably, even as other social and environmental urgencies have gone unattended. Bogotá vaulted to international fame in the early 2000s on the strength of these efforts, with two innovative infrastructural solutions to its mobility situation in particular garnering acclaim, the TransMilenio bus rapid transit system and an extensive network of bicycles lanes (*las ciclorutas*). Even as these infrastructures have faltered in recent years, city leaders have doubled down on even more ambitious efforts at traffic reform. Meanwhile, public interest in the 'mobility question'—in why the city is not moving well, what that means, and how it might be remedied—is unrelenting. Living in Bogotá, as I did for 11 months in 2014-2015, there is incessant chatter about traffic: on social media, in the newspapers, in the cafés, on the bus. And Bogotanos do more than just talk. They form and reform activist groups, businesses, guilds, political alliances and other associations through which they dive headlong into the mobility problem and work

to materialize different visions of urban life.

Engaging debates in critical geography about urban democracy, this dissertation explores the political meaning of this groundswell of striving around mobility—an expansive set of efforts that have, thus far, failed to neutralize the problem but have successfully transformed it in large and small ways. This questioning about democracy in traffic emerged inductively from the research: I did not arrive in Bogotá planning to study democratic life. I began to think about it seriously when my research indicated that Bogotanos *themselves* viewed the mobility situation as highly relevant to the 'democratic question,' frequently speaking and writing of them in relationship to one another. At the same time, I will admit to having reached a different conclusion about the democratic relevance of the traffic problem than many Bogotanos I spoke with seemed to have. Or perhaps it would be better to say that I found myself exploring a different *aspect* of that relationship that led me to paint a more affirmative picture than many Bogotanos might.

The dissertation is framed in terms of a productive tension between my empirical experience in Bogotá and dominant discourses, academic and popular, about urban democratic life. Even though I did not yet have the conceptual vocabulary to describe it, all this practice in, on and around traffic struck me as strongly expressing something irrepressibly democratic in the basic sense of a people ('demos') making significant efforts to rule ('kratia') themselves by exerting at least a measure of control over the conditions of their common existence. Yet both on the ground in Bogotá and, for different reasons, in conversations in critical urban geography, the predominant message that circulates about democracy tends to dwell on its absence or failure, often tracing

these to some combination of socioeconomic inequality, broken institutions, public apathy, and the constitutive aporias and impossibilities of egalitarian self-rule as an ideal.

Bogotanos would frequently describe their city (and country, for that matter) as "poco democrático"—little democratic—and some saw the traffic problem as a symbol and manifestation of this failure. Oscar Díaz Goméz, a health insurance administrator, told me in an interview [November 26, 2014] about how 'todo se ve' (all is seen or reveals itself) about political failure in the struggles with the mobility problem in Bogotá: the corruption of the state institutions and their ineptitude, the greed and cynicism of politicians, and the incapacity of the Bogotá public to respond with appropriate concentration or force. As Díaz Goméz explained:

> There is no democracy, just oligarchy. I am not a communist, but people should be able to make change in their own society. Politicians buy votes, but they promise things and the people don't know better… what is lacking is the consciousness of a society, the question: What does the community need? People just think about money… We don't change, modify, think about what the city needs, avoid problems.

Díaz Goméz's despondent sentiments about the nominally democratic government and the polity it purportedly represents were not unique. The 2013 Encuesta de Desigualdad (Survey on Inequality) by local politics and opinion watchdog Bogotá Cómo Vamos found that fully 93% of Bogotanos believed that the city was "governed by a small number of powerful groups for their own benefit," while just 7% (the governors?) believed it was ruled for "the good of the people." More generally, to the extent that democracy implies and requires substantive equality in society to be meaningful or real, as most commentators argue it must (Mouffe, 2005), Bogotá comes up demonstrably

short. The city is among the most unequal in the world, with vast differentials of wealth and of access to education, political influence, and resources.

Granting all of this, I still left that interview with Díaz Goméz with the lingering feeling that, by reveling quite justifiably in political depression, Díaz Goméz was discounting certain habits—individual and collective—that might be counted as 'democratically meaningful' if we imagined that phenomena otherwise and if Bogotanos (and social theorists) were more generous about democratic practices that did not bear immediate, revolutionary results. After all, I was in the cafeteria of Díaz Goméz's health insurance administration company that day because of his 'side-occupation,' the blog he started in 2013 called *Investigación TransMilenio* and which did exactly that: investigate TransMilenio through research and writing projects aimed at "getting a handle on, expressing his frustration with, and informing his fellow citizens about" an infrastructural system that he was forced to use daily and that he felt was a "disgrace to the dignity of the people." Díaz Goméz's claim that Bogotanos "lacked a consciousness of society" simply did not resonate with my research findings, which from the first indicated high levels of social and political consciousness—at least among the *mobility* public. This group, whose contours I will define in due course, consistently expressed an impressive working knowledge of the complexities of the traffic situation and of the history of political struggle around it.

Indeed, I was more swayed by the arguments of local transportation planner Andrés Archila [interview, April 16, 2015]. He also bemoaned what he saw as tepid habits of public engagement in what he called a 'young country' that had just ratified a

new democratic constitution in 1991 and that had suffered a long, debilitating civil war. But he also pointed to a lot of democratic energy swirling around the mobility problem, in particular. "The 80s and 90s were awful and those problems of war and terror and corruption were all people could think about. The civil society activity is not as strong as elsewhere but people are learning, especially by working on mobility and public space," Archila emphasized. If something like a 'democratic awakening' was occurring around the traffic problem in Bogotá, as Archila suggested, an organizing question of the dissertation became: what is it about the traffic problem in Bogotá as a 'socio-environmental situation' that might feed and sustain this movement?

The argument

The dissertation argues that the 'failure' of political institutions to remedy traffic in Bogotá has left the problem to linger and nurture democratic life in the form of collaborative and contestatory public practice. Traffic's hyper-presence as an engulfing, 'lived' environmental situation means that it is readily available to emergent subjects, publics and counter-publics as a living laboratory in which possibilities for engagement and activism are sustained. Moreover, because the mobility problem is an inescapable everyday reality even for elites, it forces Bogotanos into an antagonistic political situation that makes them grapple productively with their troubled togetherness. Although the ability to influence the mobility situation is by no means equal, I further argue that there is a notably accessible quality to traffic: it is an 'issue' that Bogotanos from all classes literally walk out into everyday and 'make their voices heard' in, in the sense that they

can transform the common condition through deliberate action—and often to the frustration of elites who are trying to manage behavior in traffic in the service of their own interests. Finally, while I connect the political 'heat' that mobility generates to traffic's materiality, I do not mean to suggest that this is the sole explanatory variable. Bogotá's contingent political history of aggressive and well-publicized mobility reform, I suggest, also played a large part in traffic's deepening democratization.

More philosophically put, the central claim the dissertation makes is that democratic life—the self-governing energy of an emergent 'people' (what we will learn to call a 'public')—grows in practical confrontation with the material problems that urban life throws up. At the same time, such problems introduce political antagonism into the social field, 'dividing us together' as I figure it in the dissertation's title. These arguments are inspired by the work of the American pragmatist John Dewey (1859-1952), the dissertation's central philosophical interlocutor. Political democracy, for Dewey, is an inventive practice of taking care of the serious trouble in which strangers who do not share a way of life find themselves collectively implicated. Perhaps this pragmatic idea that people become democratic together through remedial practice on the problems that jointly affect them rings trite and self-evident to the reader. Certainly Dewey's idea has resonances with other strands of democratic theory.[3] Yet it is not, in fact, the predominant opinion of the democratic theories that urban geographers tend to work with, mainstream-

[3] Iris Marion Young (1991), for example, has argued that today's megacities pose a challenge to democratic theory: to conceive democratic politics as "a relationship of strangers who do not understand one another in a subjective and immediate sense, relating across space and time" in the context of urbanity as a material given that implicates people in common problems (p. 234, 237).

liberal democratic theory and radical democratic theory (Barnett & Bridge, 2013), and it finds pure expression in Dewey's problem-based political ontology.

As Barnett (2014) notes, urban geography in its dealings with democratic theory tends to reiterate debates in urban political theory, figured in terms of a stylized contrast between theories which see contestation as the ineradicable lifeblood of democracy and theories which continue to emphasize the importance of defining procedures for arriving at agreement and within which limited dispute can take place. Liberal-democratic theory tells us that 'democracy' refers to a set of institutions plopped atop the social whose function is to represent and arbitrate the interests of pre-defined subjects and territorially defined 'demos' or 'peoples'. Research in geography in this area focuses attention on the mechanisms of institutionalized liberal democracy, accepting as given the norms of representation and fairness embedded in them and examining their efficacy in different contexts (Barnett & Law, 2004).

On the other hand, radical democratic theories—largely represented in this dissertation by the figure of Jacques Rancière and related 'post-political' urban theory (Davidson & Iveson, 2015a, 2015b; Swyngedouw, 2010a, 2010b, 2011)—see democratic practice as originating in the ontological exclusion of some groups from the common wealth and from political influence. In general, a broadly shared model of democracy as contestatory regime informs research in geography on radical democracy (Staeheli, 2010). Geographies of radical democracy draw on poststructuralist strands of contemporary political theory (Rancière, 2010; Žižek, 2008; Brown, 2015; Dean, 2009) that are deeply pessimistic about liberal-democratic society and institutions. The

ascendancy of these theories is sometimes justified with reference to an overly consensual vision of politics attributed to liberal democratic theory. Research in this area tends to privilege as 'truly' democratic or "'properly political' the disruption of prevailing orders by egalitarian challenges" (Holifield & Schuelke, 2015, p. 294). Such practices are valorized when they destabilize, if only momentarily, stratified social and political orders (Davidson & Iveson, 2015a).

This pragmatist approach recasts both conventional democratic politics and disruptions of the demos as distinct moments in a nonlinear trajectory of action upon public problems (Holifield & Schuelke, 2015; Latour 2007). Like the post-structuralists, the pragmatists did not think democracy was primarily a matter of decision-making procedures or forms of government. Dewey (1954) assumed from the outset that the state would fail to produce just and good outcomes to an emergent public's most difficult problems. While Dewey had no absolute faith in the state (or capitalism) and was resistant to the idea of institutionalizing permanent procedures, he was adamant that democracy was a practical problem of how we might organize and self-administer our lives in a chaotic and changeful world. Dewey's philosophy considers the impulse for self-government as emergent from bothersome 'problematic situations' in which we find ourselves thrown with others, and which compel us to negotiate and struggle over the form, meaning and substance of response. Although difficult and frustrating to live with, problems can therefore be perversely generative: democratic ambition feeds off urgencies that threaten our flourishing, not unlike the way that, for Naomi Klein (2007), capitalism feeds off crisis and disaster.

The dissertation focuses on how political subjects grow capacities for engagement, invention, and inter-subjective cooperation within the material situations of everyday life, and without "deducing political interests from deeper interests established outside political processes" (Barnett & Low 2004, p. 3). I follow geographers Barnett and Bridge (2013) in drawing on philosophical pragmatism to consider aspects of urban democratic experience that are obscured by the dominant the duality of 'consensual' theories of liberal-democratic procedure and 'dissensual' theories of disagreement and destabilization 'from below'. Yet it differs from this work in two key ways. First, rather than arguing for the value of pragmatism in abstract comparison to other philosophical 'systems,' I show how it illuminates an empirical case—a practice more consistent with pragmatic method. Second, while Barnett and Bridge emphasize the uses of pragmatism for thinking about alternative institutional designs and "restoring an institutional imagination to debates about radical democracy" (p. 1026), my work considers questions of political subjectivity, of the constitution and function of 'the' public sphere, and of the interplay between democratic practice and everyday life.

To be clear, I fully agree with radical democratic theorists that capitalist urbanization produces unconscionable social exclusions and marginalizations as well as that, as Marx (1843) argued long ago, equality of participation in democratic society ultimately requires substantively equal conditions of life. Dewey (1936) also agreed with the Marxists on this point, although he had different ideas about confronting it, as we will see. What I am suggesting instead is that identifying democracy as disagreement and destabilization by marginalized subjects excludes too much of the political experience of

average Bogotanos and threatens to miss what is present in 'regular' public life that might be of progressive and even radical potential. In the endeavors in traffic that populate this dissertation, we find Bogotanos of all estratos[4] 'tapping' the energy and shared experience of traffic to experiment with alternative ways of living. This activity resonates with Dewey's (1976) argument that democracy's ethical significance is grounded in the freedom generated by society for individuals to develop their potential for participation in political and cultural life. In this sense, the concerns that animate Dewey's discussion of democracy are fundamentally different than those that animate Rancière's: while the former is concerned with the social and environmental conditions that compel meaningful public engagement, the latter is concerned with how the claims of marginalized groups become excluded from regimes of recognition, or, conversely, how they would unsettle existing social orders if they were included. Ultimately, I argue that research practice on urban democracy might learn to 'tap' the potential of urban life and its problems similarly, channeling it experimentally towards valued urban futures and political forms. What begins as an inquiry into the public life of what I call in the 'hot problem' of traffic in Bogotá concludes in an examination of critique as a research practice.

The 'rise and fall' of a mobility star

[4] City authorities classify Bogotá households and neighborhoods into administrative designations called 'estratos' that delineate relative average incomes and wealth concentration on a scale of 1-6 and tie them to geographical location. Effectively, los estratos are class signifiers: people are identified and sometimes self-identify as '1s,' '2s,' '3s,' etc. The lowest is stratum 1 which represents those with monthly incomes below the legal minimum wage. Stratum 2 includes those with incomes between one and three times the minimum wage and Stratum 3 those in the range of 3 to 5. The highest stratum is 6, which covers households with an income of more than 16 times the minimum wage. According to Bogotá Como Vamos (2015), estrato by percent of population is as follows: 1: 9%; 2: 39%; 3: 36%; 4: 9%; 5: 3%; 6: 2%; No data: 2%. The majority of Bogotanos (65%) fall within lower-middle-class estratos of 2 and 3.

In the early 2000s, Bogotá became a surprise global urban model for its smart and inclusive urban design and infrastructure building. An inventive form of mass transit, the TransMilenio bus rapid transit system (BRT), cemented the city's reputation, and urban leaders from around the world visited Bogotá throughout the 2000s in order to learn about it and replicate it in their own cities (Figure 1). Charles Montgomery's (2013) *Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design* relates what has become a standardized narrative of Bogotá's design-led turn-around, albeit with notable dramatic flare: toward the end of the 20th Century, Montgomery writes, Bogotá had become "a truly horrible place to live—one of the very worst on earth; seared by a decades old civil war and sporadic terrorism in the form of grenades and firebombs; and hobbled by traffic, pollution, poverty and dysfunction" (p. 5-6). But then, lead by visionary mayor Enrique Peñalosa, the city constructed TransMilenio, the new system of bicycle infrastructure (*las ciclorutas*), architecturally significant libraries and schools in poor neighborhoods, and other spatial interventions oriented toward creating a more inclusive, interconnected and functional built environment. In this way, the story goes, the Colombian capital had a miraculous renaissance, showing the world that Global South

Figure 1: A TransMilenio bus passes through historic central Bogotá. Photo: Pilar Salcedo.

cities were not as ill-governed and destitute as books like *Planet of Slums* (Davis, 2005) depicted them. Through good planning and good governance, poor cities could turn themselves around (Gilbert, 2006).

What was innovative technologically about TransMilenio was that it mimicked the functionality and capacity of a subway at a fraction of the construction cost. To construct the initial lines of the system, the city usurped road space from cars and turned this space over to bus-only lanes and a massive fleet of red, high-capacity buses that shuttle, today, 2.3 million passengers per day from the outskirts of the city into the urban core (Figure 2). Before the invention of TransMilenio the traffic situation in Bogotá was dire. Bogotá as a city expanded exponentially in the 1950s and 1960s, with the private bus industry and the construction industry working in tandem to provide housing and mobility at greater and greater distances from the center of this mononuclear city.

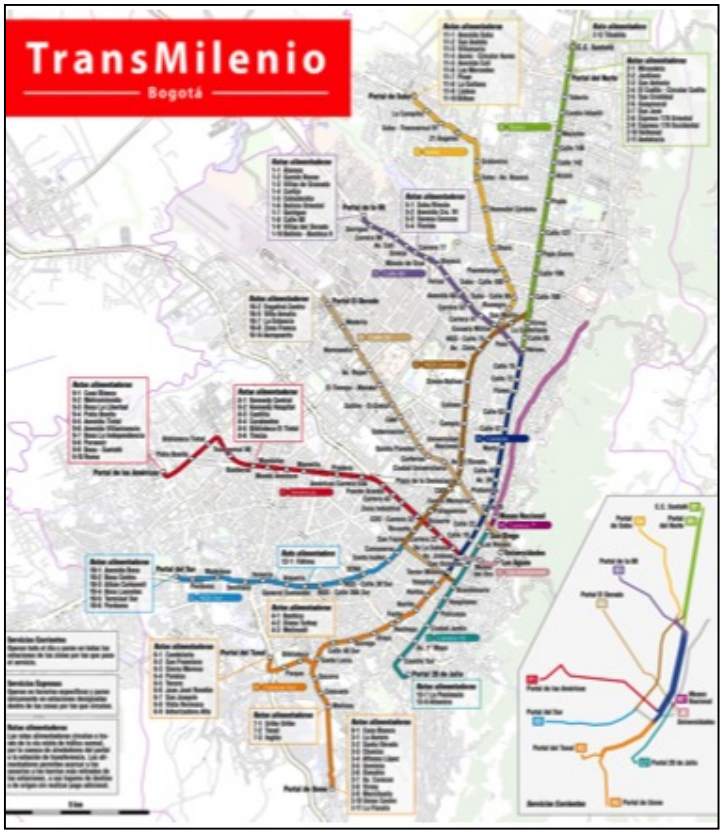

Figure 2: Current map of the TransMilenio Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. Source: www.transmilenio.gov.co

The bus system was technically public transit and it mobilized the vast majority of Bogotá commuters; today,

despite the rapid growth of personal motorization, nearly 70% of trips in Bogotá are *still* made by bus. Yet the state largely relinquished the management (and significant profits) of public transit to the private companies in a clientelistic relationship in which political elites received financial and political support from the bus tycoons.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, as the local mobility expert Fernando Rojas told me (interview, April 13, 2015), transportation planning in the city largely focused on providing road space for private vehicles rather than on organizing public modalities, despite limited access to car-based mobility among the general public. Even this effort was not robust: road maintenance was notoriously scant and few major thoroughfares were built in these decades. The result of this minimal action and neglect of public modes was that, by the mid-1990s, Bogotá was in almost the total gridlock. By 1998, when Peñalosa assumed office, it could take 3-4 hours to get from periphery to center, the average speed at rush hour was less than 7 miles per hour, and 95% of road space was consumed by the 19% of Bogotanos who drove cars (Gómez, 2003). The introduction of TransMilenio cut commute times from the periphery in half and brought a newfound optimism that improvement on the most difficult challenges and better quality of life were possible to achieve.

Although Peñalosa is generally the hero in popular histories of Bogotá's 'renaissance,' a series of important political transformations made it possible for the city to tackle its traffic problem more aggressively than it had in the past (Montezuma, 2003). For one, like many cities in Latin America, Bogotá improved governance in recent years in part through political decentralization (Gilbert, 2015). Until 1988, the mayor of Bogotá

was appointed by the national president and unaccountable to an electorate. As Gilbert (2006) explains, a series of new decentralization laws between 1987 and 1993 empowered local authorities to provide public services (such as water and sanitation), schools, local health services, recreational facilities, roads, co-financing of low-cost housing, transportation management, public order and support to vulnerable groups. Colombia's new national constitution, ratified in 1991, provided for an increasing proportion of central government income to be distributed to local governments.

Between 1988 and 2008, Bogota´had seven elections that each produced a mayor who stood against the traditional two-party political system. The balance of power within Bogotá also shifted dramatically with the passing of the Organic Statute in 1993—widely attributed to liberal Mayor Jaime Castro (1992-1994)—which limited the City Council's responsibilities to passing laws and to supervising the executive and gave the mayor much more autonomy in administering the city (ibid). Castro also increased and rationalized taxes on property, industry, gas and vehicles that generally improved municipal budgets and made Bogotá fiscally stable (Skinner, 2004)**.** Finally, the first administration of Mayor Antanas Mockus promoted a culture of citizenship that made citizens reflect on the importance of changing attitudes and behavior in public (Montezuma, 2003). All of this laid the groundwork for the Peñalosa-era mobility reforms that did not exactly 'fix' the traffic problem, but indubitably improved the situation. These included TransMilenio and the *ciclorutas,* but Peñalosa also raised the price of parking to disincentivize driving, improved sidewalks and erected barriers so cars could not park on them, and introduced 'pico y placa' regulations that banned private

cars and taxis from circulating on assigned days of the week.

For many of the professional urbanists that I interviewed, at least, the beginning of the end of Bogotá's golden era was 2008. Carlos Moreno and Álvaro Torres (interview, August 8, 2014) of the La Universidad Piloto de Bogotá described 2008 as a 'political rupture' after which the political continuity that stretched from the first Mockus (1995-1997) administration through the mayoralty of Peñalosa to that of Luis Eduardo Garzón (2004-2007) was broken. After came three mayors from the traditional political left who wanted to distance themselves from Peñalosa's legacy and especially from his signature invention, TransMilenio. Samuel Moreno (2008-2010) was elected on a platform that promised a metro (subway) as the solution to the city's traffic woes and denigrated the continued development of the bus rapid transit as a viable mobility solution. Of course, Moreno's message would not have had appeal if there were no

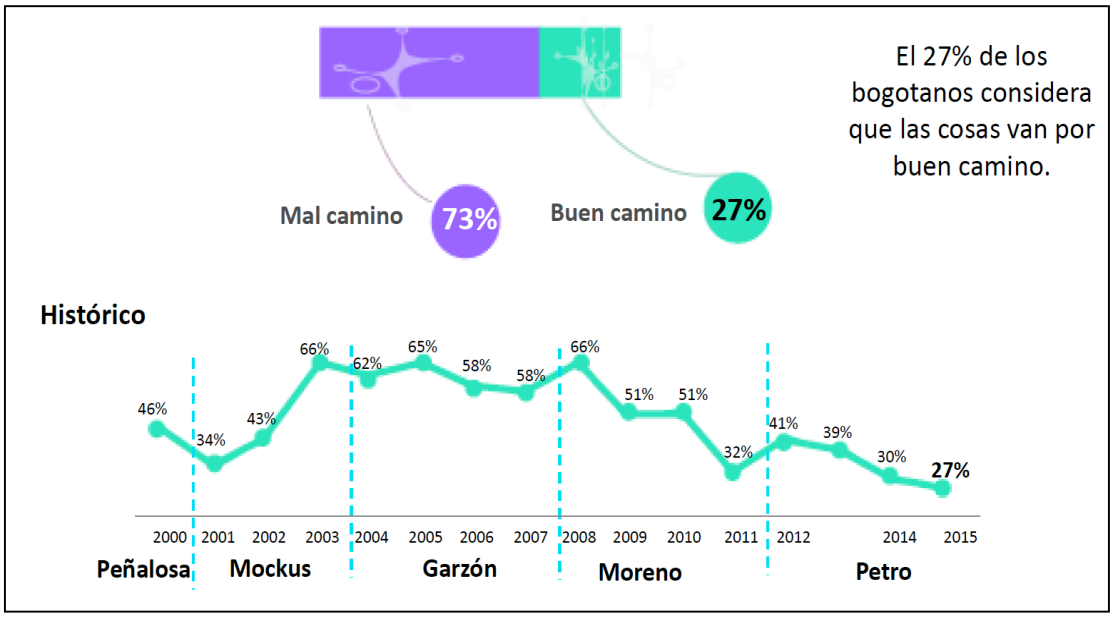

Figure 3: "Are things going well ('buen camino') or poorly ('mal camino') in the city?" The chart tracks Bogotanos' response to this question over the course of the previous four mayoral administrations, and it reveals a notable recent decline in public optimism. Source: Bogotá Como Vamos, Encuesta de Percepción Ciudadana, 2015.

substance to his claims. If, for the first 5 or 6 years after the first TransMilenio line was constructed, Bogotanos were proud of and happy with the system, by 2008 it was already showing signs of decline: physically dilapidated, over-capacity, and already behind on the timeline that the Peñalosa administration had charted for its expansion, which was to proceed in 7 phases over two decades and finish with 21 lines (to date 3 phases and 12 lines are complete). The public optimism that typified the 'miracle years' was withering and trust in local government was evaporating (Figure 3). The Moreno administration halted the design process of Phase 4 of TransMilenio, while Moreno himself pilfered money from the Phase 3 expansion that had been launched under his predecessor, Garzón. The incident returned the familiar stench of corruption to public office in Bogotá. Moreno ended up in jail before his term ended and without delivering the promised metro or completing his other ambitious mobility gambit, the Sistema Integrado de Transporte Público (SITP) (see chapter 2).

By the time I arrived in Bogotá for my first preliminary research visit in 2011, the 'mobility renaissance' had come to a close. The international press had not kept up with events, and I recall the surprise. In my first conversations with Bogotanos I naively expected confirmation of the celebratory discourses circulating about TransMilenio and Peñalosa, but in fact Bogotanos tended to express anger, frustration and disappointment with the system and with the latter's legacy. "Uh, pésimo!" they would say when I told them what I came to the city to study. "The worst!" Popular sentiment about mobility and about Bogotá continued to deteriorate in the following years. According to a December 2014 survey by Bogotá Cómo Vamos (2015), 71% of Bogotanos thought that

TransMilenio service was worsening, a figure that had increased 40 percentage points since the same survey in 2013. Little maintenance or expansion of the bicycle infrastructure had occurred in almost a decade. The infrastructural solutions that, at least apocryphally, had 'tied the city together' socially and spatially (Castro & Echeverrí, 2011) and launched an 'urban renaissance' had shifted to take on opposite public meaning, as expressing the perennial failure of Bogotá's public institutions and leaders to manage the city in the public interest (Eduardo Behrentz, interview, October 27, 2014).

When I arrived in Bogotá for long-term research in July 2014, the political climate struck me as a strange soup that mixed extreme political ambition—the SITP's promised 'total mobility reform' and the resolute quest for a metro—and public cynicism about the local democratic state's ability to carry out these projects or manage mobility effectively in light of TransMilenio's ongoing collapse. At least for the political and administrative elite in central Bogotá, the sitting leftist mayor, Gustavo Petro, was a failure on the mobility reform front (and on most other matters of public administration). Yet there was glimmer of hope in my last months in Bogotá in spring 2015: Petro seemed to have had pushed the contracting and financial negotiations on the metro far enough to have 'locked in' its delivery, after 50 years of undelivered promises. 'It's definitely coming,' interviewees told me, and it felt fortuitous that my research would close in-step with an important chapter in the mobility history of Bogotá. In the event, and as I discuss more in Chapter 4, the metro had not advanced far enough to become irreversible. I followed the 2016 mayoral contest from afar as the left vote split between two metro-supporting candidates and, improbably, the now-disliked Enrique Peñalosa—anti-metro

crusader and BRT champion—was elected for another term 13 years after his first one. The future of mobility policy was thrown into turmoil once more, and today it moves toward a future where the only certainty is more uncertainty, more debate, and more conflict in and around the problem of how to fix traffic and make Bogotá move.

Methodology: In pursuit of a problem

I completed12 months of mixed-methods, qualitative research conducted from July 27, 2014—June 31, 2015. My research question expanded over the course of investigation, from one that felt too narrowly defined to one that sometimes felt too unwieldy. My original research objects were the two renowned infrastructures, TransMilenio and the ciclorutas. I started out investigating the claims of advocates of these infrastructures, made in the language of urban design, that because they were geometrically extensive networks that touched all corners of the city, they had 'tied it together' socially and spatially and countered urban fragmentation (Castro & Echeverrí, 2011). In other words, these were claims that tried to link Bogotá's renaissance to its spatial form. Was this true?

This question was easy to pose in thought, but on the ground I encountered obstacles to realizing a response. For one, urban integration and fragmentation are metaphorical concepts for describing a city's social relations and 'collective mood' that are measured in the literature in a multiplicity of non-compatible ways (Michelutti, 2010). Second, as the Actor-Network Theory-influenced literature on urban infrastructure showed, when infrastructures are viewed (as they must be) as complex assemblages of

human and non-human elements that undergird material circulation, it is difficult to definitively isolate 'infrastructural action' and its effects from the larger urban process: "El transporte," as multiple interview subjects told me using the same phrase, "toca de todo" (transport touches everything). Third, on the ground, selecting out TransMilenio and the ciclorutas from the rest of the mobility situation felt much more contrived than it had in theory. In sum, I reached an impasse with respect my original question, published a paper that considered that impasse (Cesafsky, 2017), and moved forward.

The new, admittedly-too-nebulous research agenda became to understand the mobility problem in its totality and to track how the city was 'dealing with it' in the broadest sense. I trusted that a more targeted theme and thesis would arise inductively from this work as it moved forward. In the end one did, although this meant that a substantial amount of empirical material did not make it into the dissertation. One thing I noticed early on in the research is that public problems—especially 'hot' ones like traffic (see Chapter 1)—are in some ways easy to study. They generate a lot of noise and, almost by definition, people feel compelled to talk to about them. At the same time, they are difficult to study because they have convoluted histories, and when they are antagonistic and controversial it can be hard to ascertain the truth of the matter. In Bogotá there are experts and officers and activists of the traffic problem, but no certainties. Because there was not just one story of traffic, but instead a multitude of them, the question of how Bogotá was affected by mobility and what it was doing about it became larger still.

Accepting that the view of the situation that my empirical research provided would only ever be partial in both senses of the term (incomplete and biased), I found

myself doing what I argue in Chapter 3 many Bogotanos do: crawling up inside the problem by whatever entry points were available and trying to put myself in a more satisfactory relationship with to it by knowing it better. Much of the research felt like being lost. Being lost in the city while trying to navigate the TransMilenio and SITP and taxis and bicycle routes and Transporte Colectivo Público (the old bus system; see Chapter 2) so that I could make it to interviews and events. Being lost in history of a place I did not understand culturally. Being lost in a political system I did not know. I maintained two ever-expanding lists: one of people and institutions of interest and the other of unanswered questions about how the whole thing worked.

I ended up completing 76 semi-structured interviews with a range of Bogotanos affected by and engaged with the traffic problem in some collective (public) dimension. Bogotanos were, literally without exception, tremendously kind and generous; this research—whatever it is worth—owes it all to their graciousness. In the beginning my Spanish was mediocre and I started the interviews with the 'low-hanging fruit': academics on whom I relied on for a general picture of the situation, and many of whom had studied elsewhere in other languages and knew how to speak comprehensibly to language-learners. I moved on to government functionaries, politicians, unions/guild leaders, and activists. These included a mobility lawyer, three political scientists from La Universidad de Los Andes and La Javeriana, and a manager at *Bogotá Como Vamos*, the public opinion research group whose findings are sprinkled throughout. I spoke to a handful of planners and public administrators at the Secretary of Mobility and at TransMilenio/SITP. I spoke to several of Bogotá's 'public intellectuals' on mobility that

one encounters all the time in the press: Dario Hidalgo of Embarq, Carlosfelipe Pardo of Despacio, and Eduardo Behrentz of the La Universidad de Los Andes. I interviewed business and market leaders: a representative from Volvo who sells buses to Bogotá, an owner of multiple parking lots, representatives of the pro-business organizations Invest in Bogotá and the Cámara Comercio de Bogotá. I spoke with leaders, partisans and/or employees of all the major modalities that compose the passenger traffic system: taxis, bicycle taxis, pedestrians, bicycles, motorcycles, cars, busetas/colectivos (the TPC), piratas (pirate taxis), SITPs, TransMilenio and, the most recent addition to the multi-modal mix, Über. These included the president of a taxi guild, the head of a small bicycle taxi company, and several young people organizing around the bicycle as an emancipatory tool. I also interviewed political leaders, including 5 *ediles* (neighborhood presidents) from diverse barrios as well as the city council president, Miguel Uribe Turbay.

To better understand the experience of Bogotanos who were not taking a public role in the problem, but merely trying to get by in it, I completed two focus groups and three 'ride-alongs' with commuters wherein they narrated their experiences as we moved in traffic. One of these was with a bus rider, one with a driver, and the third with a cyclist. The focus groups were the most difficult aspect of the research. I had lofty ambitions but struggled with the practicalities of subject recruitment and organization, and the groups turned out less than ideal social-scientifically. One I completed with a very small number of community leaders in the periphery of peripheral Ciudad Bolivar in a barrio called Mochuela (Figure 4) and the other with a group of 9 young people, several

of whom were friends of mine, at an LGBT center where I spent time.

The Mochuela focus group I owe to the assistance of two activist-organizer friends (and radical female cyclists) from Ciudad Bolívar, one of Bogotá' poorest and most insecure *localidades* that I would not have been safe getting to know on my own, and that they generously invited me into on multiple occasions. These friends arranged for 5 or 6 community leaders among their contacts in Ciudad Bolívar to meet for the focus group, but the SITP bus we were awaiting never came and, embarrassingly, we were 50 minutes late for our own meeting. It was a great lesson in the injustice of peripheral transport in Bogotá, but we ended up with only three participants. The focus group at the LGBT center was more successful conversationally even if, demographically, it was far from the random sample of Bogotá commuters I had envisioned. The findings from this second focus group make up a large amount of the empirical material presented in

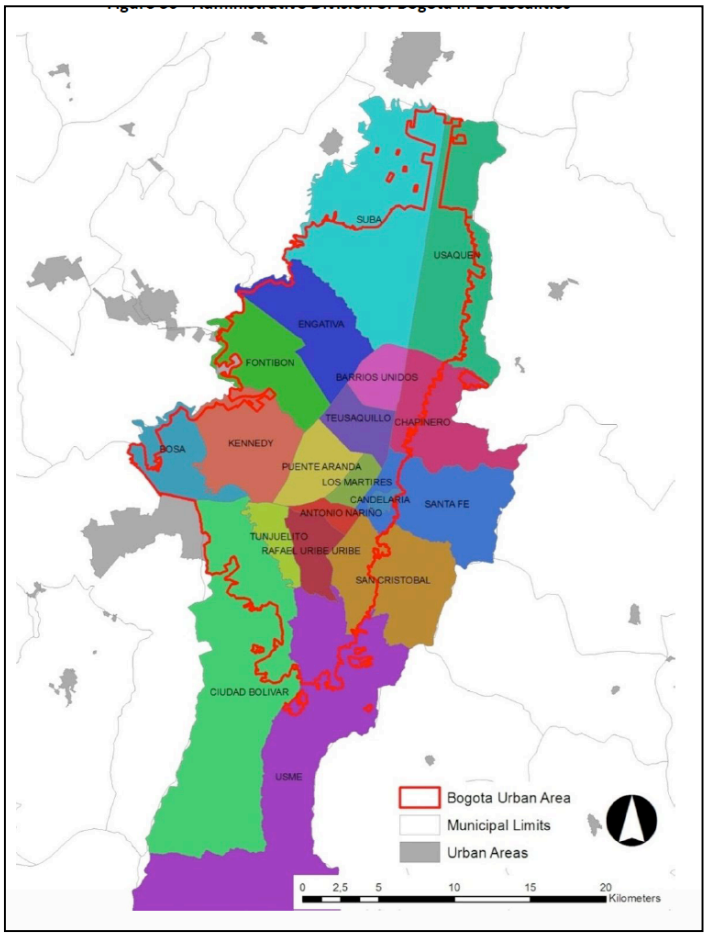

Figure 4: Administrative Division of Bogotá into 20 *localidades*. Ciudad Bolívar is the large green region at bottom left. Source: World Bank (2012).

To round out my understanding of the traffic problem and the publicity around it, I analyzed transportation news and debates in traditional and social media throughout the research and continued to do so from afar after returning to Minneapolis. This includes following the two major daily newspapers, *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador*, reading alternative news sites and political blogs, and following transportation-related groups and commentary on Facebook. Following all this proved a busy task, as the mobility situation was a constant source of debate and conversation. By way of example, from my second one-month preliminary research trip to Bogotá in 2012 (the first was in 2011), I saved an image of the digital metro section of *El Tiempo* in which 12 of the 15 articles had to do with traffic in some dimension: two discussed a threatened taxi strike, averted at the last minute; two discussed new technologies that promised to improve the situation: an electric car and a new smartphone application for making secure taxi requests; one was about the always-contentious TransMilenio contracting process; one was about a study for the new metro; two discussed drunk drivers and drunk driving; etc. From this work on discourse and publicity I also encountered what I came to think of as an organic Bogotá literary genre, the 'mobility narrative essay,' which I discuss in Chapter 4.

Finally, the research included participant observation on all the transport modes in Bogotá and attendance at seven transportation-related public events. Some of these events were hosted by the city, such as a "Pedestrians' Forum" I attended in October 2014, and some were not mobility-focused *per se* but still featured extensive discussion of the problem, such as at the Qué Alcalde Necesita Bogotá? (What Mayor Does Bogotá Need?)

event in April 2015. One advantage of studying mobility is that one is 'researching' even when just moving about the city to work and recreate; I carried my notebook and recorded experiences.

Most Bogotanos will tell you that mobility is a nightmare, but in many ways I moved better there than in any city I have lived—a fact that speaks to several privileges. Chief among these is that I could often schedule interviews at non-peak hours to avoid the morning and evening crush. Moreover, it was an extreme advantage to live in a central neighborhood (Chapinero) one half-block off a major North-South thoroughfare, *La Septima*, which connects the historic core and the modern business district—both locations where my research frequently took me. Walking out my door and down a hill about 20 steps, I could hop onto one of the *busetas* (TPC) that passed every minute or so or (more rarely) grab one of the estimated 10,000 cabs in circulation. Sometimes I bicycled shorter distances, although I will admit that Bogotá's reputation as a great cycling city was soured for me by the combination of aggressive driving, pollution, altitude, rain, and the lack of secure places to park bicycles. (I have tremendous respect for the city's thousands of intrepid and committed bicycle commuters). When I travelled outside of Bogotá's central corridor I invariably took TransMilenio, which I could board roughly 6 blocks from my house on *La Avenida Caracas*. The new SITP buses I rarely used: like many Bogotanos I found the routes difficult to navigate, despite the fact that I was studying mobility full-time.

I owe a debt of gratitude to María Paula Hernández, my research assistant during my last four months in Bogotá. María Paula was a senior studying anthropology at La

Universidad del Rosario, where I held the position of Visiting Doctoral Researcher. Her assistance was both practical and conceptual. The latter months of my work included the focus groups, a lot of research in the peripheral neighborhoods, and the bulk of the research on members of what would be called in Bogotá *las clases populares*—the 'popular' or working classes. María Paula and I would make research visits together once per week to far-flung parts of the city, and her linguistic, cultural and geographical expertise was crucial on these outings.

María Paula and I also had an informal "social theory reading group" for which I provided texts by Foucault and Latour for us to discuss. María Paula doubted that Foucault, in particular, read well in Bogotá: his discussions of biopolitics and biopower seemed to assume an extended, encompassing state apparatus that all citizen-subjects were already inside. What seemed true in Bogotá, by contrast, was that people had differential relationships to biopolitical apparatuses of power and that many were simply excluded entirely. María Paula found Latour's actor-network theory, on the other hand, more compelling in the sense that it saw the social in terms of networks of connections and disconnections in and among objects, infrastructures, environments and bodies. These conversations primed some of the arguments that follow, especially in Chapter 2 where I contrast the political theory of Dewey (who influenced Latour) and the political theory of Rancière (who was influenced by Foucault) and fall down on the side of the former in terms of applicability to the mobility question in Bogotá.

Although some of my analysis started in Bogotá, the majority occurred after I arrived back in Minneapolis in early July 2015. There, I finished interview transcriptions

and started coding. I re-read all the content of the newspaper articles I had collected, the social media dialogues and interviews, and all of my participant observation notes, and I uploaded everything into NVivo data analysis software. Using the software I created 'nodes' to organize themes that jumped out from the data. The analytical nodes included "Paros (strikes/stoppages) and Protests," "The Mobility Conjuncture," "Fighting Informality in Transit" "Cultura Ciudadania/Civic Culture" "Crime and Danger," "Assembling the Common," "Becoming Interested, Becoming Concerned" "Visibility and Invisibility," "The TransMilenio Crisis," and "Traffic as Lived Experience." Through this process, I homed in on the central problematic of the dissertation, the question of democratic engagement with the traffic problem: why it happened, the forms it took, what it meant, and how mobility served as a material environment that sparked and enabled it.

The chapters

Each of the chapters makes a distinct contribution to debates in urban political geography. Chapter 1 chronicles my search for a category to describe the object that I studied in Bogotá and around which so much of political life seemed to orbit. I arrived in the field thinking this object was a broken infrastructure in the vein of geographers Colin McFarlane (2008) and Stephen Graham (2012). But I soon realized that 'broken infrastructure' was not quite right. What lit the fire of politics, it seemed to me, was instead the urgency of moving in the city and the obstacles this 'problematic situation' presented to well-being. The argument draws on Dewey's (1954) definition of (public)

problems as "[i]ndirect, extensive, enduring and serious consequences of conjoint and interacting behavior" **(**p. 126). It also puts Dewey in conversation with the work of Bruno Latour, who has drawn on philosophical pragmatism in his work on 'matters of concern.' I argue that there is value for political geographers in reading Dewey *qua* Dewey, rather than via Latour, who muddies the latter's democratic vision somewhat when he inserts his distinctive philosophical concern with the social construction of facts.

Chapter 2 looks at antagonism and dissensuality in traffic and at the Bogotá government's efforts at mobility reform. I argue that the state's struggle to create a durable consensus around the mobility problem—which is to say its struggle to build infrastructure—as well as the emergent public's response to these efforts brings to light some limitations of theories of post-political/post-democratic governance that geographers forward (Davidson & Iveson, 2015; Swyngedouw, 2010a, 2010b, 2011) for understanding the 'democratic question' in Bogotá**.** I suggest that traffic by its nature introduces the antagonisms into 'the social' that these theorists argue are essential to healthy democracy but eclipsed in the contemporary urban condition. The state's governing ambits, I show, have only added fuel to the dissensual fire.

The third and fourth chapters examine democratic exploration, or what Dewey calls 'inquiry.' 'Inquiry' is an umbrella term for the diversity of creative and collaborative efforts on the part of Bogotanos to understand the traffic situation and to materially reconstruct it. Chapter 3 considers how mobility becomes an arena for the emergence of political subjectivity. It compares a Deweyian theory of subjectivation with Jacques Rancière's view and argues that urban geographers need an amalgam of the two

to generate a workable and progressive theory of how democratic subjects are formed in urban environments. Through Dewey, Rancière escapes his wayward focus on performance and singularly transformational events, and through Rancière, Dewey centers the 'part with no part,' or the socially and politically marginalized.

Chapter 4 examines the work of democratic publics. The open and immediate nature of the mobility situation, I suggest, means that intersubjective, exploratory public work on it exceeds the spatial and generic boundaries of an upper middle class/elite urban public sphere. More generally, the chapter shows that Bogotanos' dealings with the mobility question are inseparable from the democratic question itself, in the sense that figuring out 'what to do about traffic' is, in and of itself, an exploration of the potentialities and limitations of collective self-governance. The argument puts Dewey into conversation with Nancy Fraser and Iris Marion Young to challenge circumscribed readings of the activity, function, and geographical remit of urban democratic publics.

The conclusion argues for the normative value of Bogotanos democratic practices despite the persistence of the traffic problem and uncertainty with respect to whether they are 'really working' to make change. It goes on to consider experimentation, affirmation and critique as research practices in light of recent disquiet about critical approaches in the geographical discipline (Anderson, 2016; Braun, 2015; McCormack, 2013; Woodyer & Geoghegan, 2013). Dewey's core message about knowledge building was that it was rational and efficacious to focus scholarly resources on fostering productive possibilities and social 'goods' where we can find them. I argue that this 'practical' take on social research and intellectual life might serve as a refreshing counterpoint for a political

geography that can sometimes mire itself in cycles of 'impractical critique' by dwelling on the constitution of political failure and dreaming up political castles in the sky. Whatever your political flavor (liberal, Marxist, anarchist, or feminist), I suggest, there may be something useful to be learned from a pragmatic scholarly attitude.

A note on reading John Dewey

When Dewey died in 1952 he left a legacy of intellectual work that touched on art, metaphysics, politics, science, logic, education, epistemology, and morals, among other matters. His collected works comprise 37 volumes. This magnitude of output, combined with his distinct intellectual approach and obtuse and inelegant prose, can make Dewey hard to read and 'deploy'. With respect to his approach, Dewey famously worked 'instrumentally,' beginning and ending with the 'problems of men' rather than with the eternal 'problems of philosophers.' This means no single work lays out his metaphysics and political ontology comprehensively (*Experience and Nature* from 1925 comes closest). *The Public and Its Problems* (1927/1954) is frequently taken to be Dewey's 'political treatise,' including by two of his popularizers in contemporary social theory, Bruno Latour and Noortje Marres. Yet Dewey once referred to *The Public and Its Problems* as his most instrumental major text in the sense that it responds to specific claim of his contemporary Walter Lippman about the function of democratic publics and does not present a general political theory (Hook, 1981).

A richer picture of Dewey's 'system' of democratic philosophy only emerges by reading synthetically across his essays and major texts, including *Experience and Nature* (Dewey, 1925); *The Quest for Certainty* (Dewey, 1929/1984); *Logic: The Theory of*

Inquiry (Dewey, 1938/1986)**;** *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935) and *Experience and Education* (1938/1997). When one does this, a remarkably coherent approach to diverse social and political questions reveals itself and makes Dewey fun to read. His central philosophical interest was in how human beings, individually and collectively, ought to approach the challenge of continual self-transformation that surviving in a world in flux demands of them. His answer, as we will see in the conclusion, was that we should 'intelligize practice' experimentally and be optimistic in a specifically pragmatic sense.

Throughout I aim for an 'amplificatory reading' (Berlant 2016) of Dewey's philosophy that develops his thought in order to see where they might take us and does not dwell on his shortcomings. I have come to identify with Dewey's insistent exploration of democracy as a 'way of life', but also his emphasis on creative experimentalism; the displacement of thought-hampering dualisms; the relation between means and ends; the development of the possibilities in mundane experience; and the origins of thought in experience and its effects back on experience. All these themes are at play in the chapters that follow.

As with the work of the pragmatists generally (Menand, 1997), it is striking that all of these attitudes grow out of a singular first principle centered on why humans think and on the genetic nature of truth. Dewey (1908) once defined pragmatism as the "doctrine that reality possesses practical character and that this character is most efficaciously expressed in the function of intelligence" (p. 58). The pragmatists averred—radically for their day—that thought and language were processually involved with the becoming of our human worlds and that truth is instrumental in handling practical affairs

and enriching immediate experience. The major pragmatists all move in different directions from this central premise and Dewey's interest in the 'democratic question' is his calling card. I try to show how a pragmatic theory of truth generates a perspective on democracy, although the democracy part comes first in the chronology of the text. I leave the reader to judge the success of this endeavor.

CHAPTER ONE **Traffic: An Anatomy of a Problem**

The radio host is eager to get down to the issue. He introduces his guest, Dr. Eduardo Behrentz, Dean of the School of Engineering at Bogotá's Universidad de Los Andes. "Look," the host says to Behrentz, "We are very worried about mobility in Bogotá, it troubles (preocuparse) all of us Bogotanos." What sparked this conversation on the local radio affiliate BluRadio on June 17, 2014, was that the leaders of both Bogotá's Secretary of Mobility and its major public bus system, TransMilenio, were leaving their posts. "Now we are in limbo," the host proclaims. "We have already lost 3 or 4 of these leadership people under [current Bogotá Mayor] Petro!"

Behrentz responds in turn,

"You could say that unfortunately the current situation, the conjuncture, and also the future outlook is not the most encouraging. The ***mobility problem*** *in the city has various components: a* ***problem*** *of infrastructure deficiency, a* ***problem*** *of weak traffic management, and then the* ***problem*** *to which you were just making reference, the institutional debility in the city. We have had three managers of TransMilenio and two Secretaries of Mobility in the last three years. And this debility, this lack of leadership, is very much part of the* ***problem****. And the challenges, yes, are many because not only do we lack leadership, but we encounter a very complex conjuncture. We are waiting on the implementation of the first line of the Metro, the implementation of the SITP [Integrated Public Transport System] has gone awry, we are also waiting to see what happens with the cable cars that they want to place in the Southwest of the city, and we are starting to hear the noise around the commuter train. So you could say that there is a series of very difficult and complex complications that unfortunately end up affecting quality of life…it's the worst moment for mobility in Bogotá."*

"Well what, then," the radio host replies, "is to be done?"

What are problems? What kinds of problems are there? Why should political geographers be interested in them? In this chapter I broach these questions by analyzing the traffic problem in Bogotá via John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy. In Colombian Spanish as much as in American English, 'problem'/'*el problema'* can designate large-

scale, multi-generic messes—the climate problem, the homelessness problem, or the mobility problem that Behrentz described—as much as fleeting, everyday obstacles like missing of one's bus. Regardless of scale, problems are social, physical and ecological arrangements that we find ourselves compelled to confront because they present obstacles to our satisfaction and flourishing. I argue in this chapter that collectively experienced problems, especially when they are highly consequential for life, viscerally present, and difficult to remedy, have many politically generative aspects. In pragmatic philosophy and in traffic in Bogotá, we find political subjectivity, democracy as inter-subjective public practice, antagonistic struggle, and the construction of political scale all tied up with the disruptive energy of problematic situations that unsettle the socio-material fabric of the (urban) world.

The 'mobility problem,' most basically, names a situation where Bogotanos must move about their city to reproduce their lives and livelihoods, where few people are satisfied with the way that mobilization now happens, and where there are is little chance of significant remediation anytime soon. Although the mobility problem holds together as a singular 'thing,' there may be as many versions of its precise contours, causes and stakes as there are Bogotanos affected by it (10 million or so people). I opened with the exchange between Behrentz and the radio host not because I think Behrentz' state and infrastructure-centric diagnosis is the one that truly gets to the 'heart of the problem,' but rather because it so clearly maps the experiential and political logic of problems, which Dewey called interchangeably 'problematic situations' and 'indeterminate situations.' Problems, as the radio host put it, 'preoccupy' individuals, institutions, and even entire

cities (*"We are very worried about mobility in Bogotá, it troubles (preocuparse) all of us Bogotanos),* meaning they "take possession" of our attention and faculties "beforehand or preferentially" (Merriam-Webster, 2016) and *en route* to motivating responsive action *("Well what then is to be done?"*). The route problems take from preoccupation to motivation passes through the body, by disturbing what I call 'regimes of satisfaction' and inducing feelings of bother and stress (*"end up affecting quality of life"*).

Problems can be personal, but they become public when they birth new 'we's,' or democratic publics, that connect people into non-identitarian 'communities' of shared affectedness and compel them toward collective action. Problems can also kick-start the machinery of the liberal-democratic state, although as we see from Behrentz' testimony remedial action (or inaction) by the state easily folds in to become 'part of the problem' ("*the institutional debility in the city..."*), especially where the state is inept, corrupt, and/or neglects to act in good faith in the service of the 'common good,' whatever that might be. When problems are difficult and enduring like traffic in Bogotá, they evolve over time, facing the public they create as a series of conjunctures (*"the current situation, the conjuncture, and also the future outlook"...),* falling into nadirs *("the worst moment for mobility"*) and even nesting inside one another like Matryoshka dolls *("The mobility problem in the city has various components: The problem of..."*). Finally, although Behrentz's testimony (like Dewey's philosophy) tends to paint a picture of a unified public ("*now we are in limbo…""we have lost…"*), we will see in this chapter that problems can become 'hot' when their occurrence and management introduces antagonisms—genuinely conflicting interests—between and among the state and

members of the emergent public that play out as conflicts over livelihood and the governance of shared conditions of life.

All cities struggle with traffic to some degree or another. The mobility problem as the basic conundrum of organizing the movement of bodies in space given extant conditions and constraints looks different in each one, yet it is general in that it has origins in the material logic of mass urbanization itself. In urbanized worlds our homes are located at some distance from the places where we work, worship, play and meet other needs and desires of social reproduction, and therefore the problem exists 'out there' as to how that distance will be surmounted. Yet the mobility problem is equally 'in here,' internal to social life and human action, in the sense that we construct it in thought (problematize) and create infrastructures and apparatuses to manage it—'solutions' that become embedded in the problems themselves (or come to make new ones). Much of Foucault's *oeuvre* was interested in the specifically biopolitical administration of problems; indeed, he located the birth of biopolitics at the intersection of the emergent, material problems of the town (Foucault, 2009) and the creative energies of experts in the emergent disciplines of social management (Collier, 2009). Dewey was working with a similar motif—socio-material transformation in the modern world meeting human invention and striving—but his interests were different: he was concerned with democracy as expressed in the awakening of efforts by ordinary subjects to manage their own affairs in the affective and political space of problems, and where state institutions failed to contain their undesirable effects.

In the first section of the chapter, I compare Dewey's 'problems' with other 'ontological disturbers' and 'things that force thought' (Whatmore, 2009) that geographers and sociologists have examined in recent years as part of similar projects aimed at understanding the constitution of democratic politics and political subjectivities in the broad frame of 'post-human political thought.' By the latter I refer to the idea that political actors are not fully present to or in command of themselves, that politics is always motivated by and spins around some*thing*, and that political action literally *takes place* within technologically- and materially-mediated contexts. Deweyan problems, I will show, are similar to Bruno Latour's (2005) 'matters of concern,' and indeed Latour has drawn on Dewey in recent years to advance his object-oriented political ontology and his work on the construction of facts and factuality. Yet I will argue that it is valuable for urban geographers to read Dewey *qua* Dewey, rather than through Latour, in order to illuminate the working of traffic politics in Bogotá and urban politics more broadly. Dewey's socio-ontology of striving in a problem-ridden and changeful world, and his broader intellectual project of understanding possibilities for democratic self-organization and human self-transformation within that uncertain world, represent important pragmatist contributions that are absent in Latour.

In the second section, I dig more deeply into the empirical situation in Bogotá in order to clarify a central issue for a political ontology of the problematic: the difference between private and public problems. Dewey argued in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927) that the kinds of problems that grow publics around them are "[i]ndirect, extensive, enduring and serious," but he neglected to elaborate on these qualities (p. 126).

I explore these qualities as they are expressed in the traffic problem in Bogotá under somewhat modified headings, as Immediate, Serious, Extensive, Divisive and Enduring. I show that when a problem has these qualities, as traffic in Bogotá does, the problem is not just public but also 'hotly' political: it introduces differing interests into a social field while also gathering people around a common object.

I borrow this idea of 'hotness' from Michel Callon's (1998) paper on 'hot situations,' but redefine it slightly to make 'hotness' describe a situation that is not just epistemologically uncertain and controversial (Callon's meaning), but one that is intensely antagonistic and conflictual in *practice.* Hot problems divide people together. They attract diverse forms of remedial action due to the way that they 1) upset regimes of satisfaction among a non-identitarian group and 2) create competing interests among that group with respect to what should be done. The chapter concludes by addressing a possible objection to the present argument.

Problems, matters of concern, and other 'ontological disturbers'

In his wide-ranging philosophical anthropology, Dewey was interested in cataloging "those features of the world that have an important bearing on the human condition, on human hopes and possibilities, [and] that are often taken for granted without being clearly articulated" (Hook, 1981, p. xiv). Problematic situations might be considered precisely such a 'feature' for geographers and critical social scientists, who have left them largely unconsidered as phenomena despite their ubiquity in everyday life, public discourse and public politics. It might be argued that figures like Latour's (2005)

'matters of concern' and Isabelle Stengers' (2005) 'things that force thought' already do the intellectual work of a political theory of the problematic via a different nomenclature, in the sense that they refer to elements and events that burst through the strictures of habitual thought and practice and insist that we *pay heed.* In order to clarify the nature and value of Dewey's thinking, this section will briefly contrast problems with other 'disturbing figures' that appear in geographical scholarship—Latour's matters of concern in particular—in order to outline how Dewey's project (and mine) differs from work like Sarah Whatmore's (2009, 2013) on scientific knowledge controversies.

Over the last 15 years or so, as part of a growing conversation between geography and science and technology studies (STS), Sarah Whatmore (2009) notes that a shared interest has emerged in scientific knowledge controversies as generative political events. Surveying the field in STS, she finds several concepts of value:

> Michel Callon's 'hot situations' (1998), Bruno Latour's 'matters of concern' (2003) and Isabelle Stengers' 'experimental events' (2005a) all provide vocabularies for addressing those moments of ontological disturbance in which the things on which we rely as unexamined parts of the material fabric of our everyday lives make their agential force felt. Such situations, matters or events render what we think we know or, more usually, what 'experts' claim to know about something the subject of intense public interrogation (ibid, p. 588).

Whatmore explores environmental knowledge controversies in particular, events in which the knowledge claims and technologies of environmental science, and the regulatory and policy practices of government agencies that they inform, become subject to public interrogation and dispute. "Such events take many forms," she continues, "but arise when the rationales and reassurances of environmental science and policy fail to convince those affected by what is at issue—whose direct experience and/or knowledge of it contradicts

prevailing expertise—or to allay their concerns" (ibid). These events give space for ordinary people to contribute democratically to knowledge-making: Callon, Latour and Stengers explicitly regard such knowledge controversies as generative events in their potential to foster the disordering conditions in which reasoning is forced to 'slow down', creating opportunities to arouse a different awareness of the problems and situations that mobilize us than is offered by scientists, policymakers, and other officers and arbiters of truth (Whatmore, 2013).

By drawing on STS to imagine and even experiment with more democratic forms of environmental knowledge-making, this work maintains STS's foundational concern with the construction of facticity and of scientific and technical authority (Whatmore & Landström, 2011). This concern with how elements of the world become true and factual, and therefore uncontroversial, sits at the heart of Latour's distinction between 'matters of concern' and 'matters of fact,' although Latour develops a buffet of terms to describe the matters around which attention and political action may or may not orbit: matters of concern, matters of fact, objects, things, gatherings, *dings*, issues, hybrids, imbroglios and situations all make appearances. In general, Latour (2005a) describes his intellectual project as exploring the 'loss of objective status' as marking a general shift from one class of these elements to second class: from objects to things, facts to issues, matters of fact to matters of concern, the determinate to the indeterminate (as Dewey would put it). Matters of fact are "indisputable, obstinate, simply there," (Latour, 2008, p. 38) whereas matters of concern are disputable and disputed, of fuzzy boundaries and uncertain constitutions, and entering consciousness—individual and collective (public)—when

their obviousness is lost. For Latour, the postmodern era has been defined by a proliferation of socio-ecological monstrosities and 'hybrids' in particular that blur the boundaries between nature and society, fact and value, and gather publics around them to debate and disagree about them (Latour 2005b).

Although there is nothing within Latour's concept of 'matter of concern' that necessitates it, geographers have tended to interpret 'loss of objective status' in terms of singular events of surprise and destabilization— as "those moments of ontological disturbance in which the things on which people rely as unexamined parts of the material fabric of their everyday lives become molten," as Whatmore puts it (2013, p. 37). We see this bias in a different area of critical geography that draws on Latour: urban infrastructure studies. Infrastructure studies picked up from STS the foundational idea that after the effects of their initial introduction are normalized, and until they suddenly rupture, working infrastructures recede into quiet invisibility as part of a wider socio-technical milieu. As Paul Edwards (2003) put the point in an agenda-setting essay,

> The fact is that mature technological systems—cars, roads, municipal water supplies, sewers, telephones, railroads, weather forecasting, buildings, even computers in the majority of their uses—reside in the naturalized background, as ordinary and unremarkable to us as trees, daylight and dirt. Our civilizations depend on them, yet we notice them mainly when they fail, which they rarely do (p. 185).

In these 'rare' moments when naturalized technological systems (matters of fact) fail, infrastructures suddenly lose their status as part of a 'technological unconscious' that "bend bodies-with-environments …without the benefit of any cognitive inputs, a pre-personal substrate of guaranteed correlations, assured encounters, and therefore unconsidered anticipations" (Thrift, 2004, p. 177). Latour's (2005b) example of a broken

slide projector usefully illustrates this movement of rupture and revelation. Listening to a lecture, Latour notes, we may barely notice the slide projector until the system unexpectedly stops projecting. Suddenly not only the thing—the projector apparatus itself—but also the whole network of things that sustains it is thrust into view. Such moments allow us—researchers and citizens—to excavate the hidden politics of flow and connection, mobility and immobility, within contemporary societies (Graham, 2009).

More recently, however, geographers (Donaldson et al., 2013; Holifield & Schuelke, 2015) have implicitly moved away from this analytical coupling between matters of concern and moments of surprise and destabilization. This work tends to build on a relatively minor paper by Latour (2007) that uses Dewey [via his former student Noortje Marres (2005)] to consider how politics has "always been issue-oriented" (p. 4) and how issues pass through 'trajectories' defined by different modalities of nominally political action. In this paper, Latour (2007) speculates about five key moments through which the political trajectory of an issue might travel. The first is the traditional territory of science studies: the emergence of new associations of humans and nonhumans, often as disputed issues or "matters of concern" that disrupt the prevailing order. A second moment occurs when such issues generate a provisional new public and a third when established institutions of government attempt to translate this problematic public and its imputed will into a "common good." A fourth moment consists of deliberation, and a fifth—which Latour associates with governmentality—takes place as matters of concern are provisionally "solved": naturalized and transformed into routines, institutions, and procedures. In the context of debates in urban political ecology around 'post-political'

thought, Holifield and Schuelke (2015), for example, draw on this paper to consider different understandings of what 'making an environmental issue political' can mean by considering how such issues pass through different modalities of politicization.

Dewey's problems have a lot in common with Latour's work on 'matters of concern,' especially since Latour has embraced Dewey's thought as he shifts his object-oriented ontological speculations toward questions of democracy and the assembly of publics. Dewey's political theory similarly begins with the exchange between a now-attentive human subject and an attention-grabbing element in her environment. Political democracy, for Dewey as for Latour, is an organic outgrowth of the problem of sustaining life in a troubled world—a question, that is, of how we take care of the serious troubles in which we find ourselves implicated with others who do not necessarily share our way of life. Moreover, throughout the dissertation we will see the traffic problem pass through several of the modalities of political action on 'issues' that Latour (2007) proposes. Traffic in Bogotá is made political in several senses in which that term is understood across political geography: its gathers publics and activates citizens, initiates the machinery of the state, and incites antagonistic dispute and struggle.

The crucial distinction between Latour and Dewey is that Dewey was fundamentally a thinker of how bodies—individual or collective ('publics')—are able to make do, grow, learn and evolve inside their lifeworlds, not of how facts are created or how objects gain or lose objectivity in networks of actants. My argument is that a more 'purely' Deweyan problem-oriented analytic better illuminates the traffic situation in Bogotá, whose nature is something more than either scientific knowledge controversy or

broken infrastructure (although it includes both of these things). It is also that some of the richness of what Dewey is saying about the connection among obstacles in the environment, knowledge-making, practical intervention in/on the world, and the constitution of political subjects, publics and governing apparatuses gets lost when Dewey's thought is filtered through the questions and concerns of science studies.

There are four brief and interconnected points to be made about this difference. The first regards the socio-ontology of striving amid obstacles and uncertainty that is the bedrock of Dewey's philosophy. Dewey sought to redirect philosophy from abstract questions to human experience, and he defined experience as what we do and how we learn, as well as what happens to us (Sleeper, 1976). Experience, for Dewey, is a continuous flow of trying to deal with problems we encounter and undergoing the consequences (Westcoat, 1992). Few branches of Dewey's thought—which ranges widely across art, metaphysics, politics, science, logic, education, epistemology, and morals—stray far from this basic starting point: that human beings, individually and collectively, develop in rhythms of disorientation and recovery with respect to their environments and that, via experimental action, they can learn to accommodate precarity and take an (always fragile) degree of control over themselves and their changeful environments. It is not that there is no other motive for human behavior or that we are problem-resolving automatons, but for Dewey the stress of building and maintaining a desirable life in a troublesome world is the basic fact of human experience and politics.

The source of a problematic situation for Dewey is a disequilibrium that occurs in the interaction between humans and environments when the satisfying relations

established between the two—often with some effort—break down. The loss of equilibrium that is registered bodily as a peril that can take on different affective hues: irritation, anger, confusion, fear, conflict, doubtfulness, frustration (Burke, 2000). Dewey's (1938) oft-cited and truly existential example of a problematic situation is hunger, which is not merely a subjective 'feeling' but an environmentally induced crisis manifested in bodily dissatisfaction and the search for food. While this may seem an extreme example, even the mundane work of the scholar that seems at first to occur only 'in the mind' (and on the computer screen) has the same experiential structure when examined pragmatically. For writing is a process of confronting the obstacles that emerge from without to trouble the elegant exposition of the idea in formation, and it is experienced (at least by this writer) as a cycle of joys and frustrations of various intensities that follow the ebb and flow of such problems' emergence.

For Dewey, problems present themselves in our immediate environments not in the form of things or objects, but specifically as multi-generic 'situations.' Only situations can be problematic: "we never experience nor form judgments about objects and events in isolation**"** (Dewey, 1938, p. 66-67). As Alexander (1987) describes them,

> Situations include the following dimensions: they are open-ended, durational-extensional-existential affairs not to be confused with 'surroundings'; they are both immediate and mediated by human thought and action; they have problematic aspects for those experiencing them; and although they are unique, they are connected by events to other situations (pp. 106–110. Cited in Cutchin 2008, p. 1561)

Dewey's view, as I noted in the introduction, and quite controversially for his day (Mackay, 1942), was that problems are not just conditions invented in the mind. Although problematization and exploratory action is essential to the 'becoming real' of

problems, for Dewey the conditions that threaten our flourishing have a virtual existence until we discover them by feeling them and, subsequently, through rational inquiry. Dewey understood problematic situations as inevitably natural and social, as part of an understanding of 'nature' that encompassed the full scope of human behaviors as well as the physical world. Anticipating arguments in contemporary political ecology, he saw situations like war and poverty, floods and earthquakes, as all occurring within an organic context of environment and society (Wescoat, 1992).

Problematic situations are 'indeterminate'—fuzzy and confused—until we make them into more 'determinate' wholes by inquiring into them (Mackay, 1942). Once we have been taken hold by a problem, we must figure out what the situation is and which facts, conditions and events compose it, so that we have the best chance of reconstructing it into something less stressful and more satisfying. This leads to the second point, which is that a pragmatic political ontology emphasizes a net gain rather than loss of factuality around problems via practices of thought, deliberation and exploration. Dewey's problematizers, like Foucault's (Collier, 2009), use their agential freedom to make concerning matters more factual, not in the sense of building scientifically verified certainties, but in sense of building architectures of knowledge that support modes of action on the problem. Those knowledges might become subject to public controversy and debate, but even so they represent a constructive accomplishment, a 'layering on' and a deepening of the situation. This matters because it makes the exploration of problems at least *potentially* about individual and social learning, as it has been with respect to traffic in Bogotá, rather than ambling along webs of relationality for which Actor-Network

Theory has been derided as epistemology and research practice.

This also matters— and this is third point—because it highlights the pragmatist understanding of knowledge as instrumental to practical action and human striving. As previously noted, geographical studies of matters of concern privilege the question of what can be said to be 'true' in environmental situations and who can participate in the production of this truth. As Marres (2007) notes, this focus risks losing touch with the originary condition of bodily embroilment amid troublesome and harmful 'things' out of which the 'concern' for matters of concern ostensibly arises, and with the practical struggles over forms of life and livelihood in precarious worlds without which such controversies lack meaning. What problems directly disturb are regimes of bodily contentment. To return to the case at hand, traffic "worries all of us Bogotanos" because it is bodily stressful and affects quality of life, not because it is epistemologically uncertain. Debate occurs because the problem is so *consequential* for life that it demands knowledges that might usefully guide our action upon it. For pragmatists, the question 'what is true?' is always a subset of the question 'what is to be done?', with the latter directed toward situations we hope to reconstruct into something more satisfying. Problems are democratically interesting because they motivate all kinds of interventionist behavior that includes but exceeds knowledge making and knowledge controversy.

Because problems *directly* upset bodily contentment rather than epistemological certainty (although these can of course be related), they have no necessary link to feelings of surprise or to "those moments of ontological disturbance in which unexamined parts of the material fabric of our everyday lives become molten" (Whatmore, 2013, p. 37). There

is nothing especially surprising about traffic; indeed, as we will see in the next section, it is interesting, in part, because it maintains a grip on attention in spite of its mundaneness. This endurance in collective consciousness is also what differentiates the traffic problem from the 'ruptured infrastructures' that the geographer Stephen Graham (2009) theorizes. Rupture denotes a sudden stoppage of flow that brings a web of connections to consciousness, but the transportation system in Bogotá flows, if haltingly. What exactly troubles it is a matter of some debate, and the transportation system and its network are perpetually splayed out on the surgery table, their anatomy dissected again and again in public discourse and as the situation changes in real time. The temporalities are therefore different: the lifecycle of ruptured infrastructure is circular (visibility-invisibility-visibility), whereas the traffic problem in Bogotá unfolds as a history, or rather as multiple histories that depend on who is telling the story.

That the traffic problem in Bogotá is both 'duro' (tough/enduring) and 'complicado' (complicated)—two terms Bogotanos frequently invoked—brings me to a fourth and final point that differentiates Deweyan problems even from 'issues and their trajectories' (Latour, 2007; Marres 2007). Problems, when they are difficult and enduring, do not simply pass from one political intervention to another. What Dewey would call a 'transactional' experience occurs wherein the problem is transformed along with the subjects, publics and states that act upon it. "Environmental problems stimulate inquiry and action, which transform the environment, engendering further problems, inquiries, actions, and consequences in a potentially endless chain" (Dewey, 1938, p. 28), and this entangled web of recursive action *deepens* in time. As Alexander (1987) puts it, "Nothing

in Dewey's thought…makes sense unless the basic doctrine that *experience grows*, and in growing takes on *meaning*, is remembered" (p. 80, *emphasis in original*)[5]. This evolutive quality is, crucially, what makes Dewey's 'cycle' of equilibrium and disequilibrium between body and environment not cyclical at all, and what makes solving difficult problems—if we manage to—not 'solving' in the common meaning of popping out an answer to a settled question. An enduring problem is continually changing, and it changes us as well as our sense of what it would mean to live a better life. Without this transactional concept embedded in the idea of continuous adjustment to conditions, one is left with a rather flat idea of the 'matter' around which democratic life assembles. Such a concept, as we will see in the next section, would do no justice to the richly meaningful, hopelessly entangled, hotly political, and ever-deepening mobility situation in Bogotá.

An anatomy of a 'hot' problem

I have addressed two of the questions originally posed: what problems are and what they do. But thus far I have treated public and private problems interchangeably. Liberal political theory is (in)famously associated with rigidly differentiating the public and private spheres as essential to the principle of limited government. Although Dewey

[5] Kaplan (1987, p. ix) puts this point even more provocatively: "Because the actual world, that in which we live, is a combination of movement and culmination, of breaks and reunions, the experience of the living creature is capable of aesthetic quality. The live being recurrently loses and establishes equilibrium with his surroundings…Space thus becomes something more than a void in which to roam about, dotted here and there with dangerous things and things that satisfy the appetite...Time ceases to be either the endless and uniform flow or the succession of instantaneous points which some philosophers have asserted it to be. It, too, is the organized and organizing medium of the rhythmic ebb and flow of expectant impulse, forward and retracted movement, resistance and suspense, with fulfillment and consummation. It is an ordering of growth and maturations—as James said, we learn to skate in summer after having commenced in winter. Time as organization in change is growth, and growth signifies that a varied series of change enters upon intervals of pause and rest; of completions that become the initial points of new processes of development."

(1936) self-identified as a liberal, he saw himself as a radical one, and one of his radical liberalisms was his insistence on what would today be called the social construction of publicity and privacy. For Dewey, the movement from the individual/private to the collective/public situation—in this case, from the problem of self-mobilization to the problem of collective circulation—occurs when a public (until then a virtual entity) discovers its collective imbrication in a problem and a desire for the remediation of negative consequences. Publicity, as I will explore more in-depth Chapter 4, is achieved as a result of a family of related types of action, including action-in-concert with others; action undertaken in public (in the open); and actions around objects of shared concern (Barnett, 2007). This chapter focuses instead on some defining qualities of highly public problems and how these are reflected in the traffic situation in Bogotá. It draws especially from the dialogue of a focus group I conducted in April 2015 with nine young, lower-middle class Bogotanos.

Dewey wrote in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927, p.126) that "[i]ndirect, extensive, enduring and serious consequences of conjoint and interacting behavior call a public into existence having a common interest in controlling these consequences." I discuss these qualities in a somewhat amended way, as Immediate, Serious, Extensive, Divisive, and Enduring. *Most* of what I have to say about these qualities with respect to traffic is reflected in this observation by Natalia Tunjacá, a Senior Analyst of Urban Development at the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce whom I interviewed in April, 2015:

> Transportation is interesting because we all find ourselves in the same conditions. Everyone has to move themselves, rich and poor, and a bad decision with respect to management makes a bad result we can feel. But it is also the major example of conviviality in the city—or perhaps, of potential

> conviviality. Transportation is the most prominent reflection of what happens in the city, of who we are together, and of how we are living together (Interview, May 16, 2015).

Evident in this quote are the Seriousness and Immediacy of the problem ('*bad* results we can *feel'*), its Extensiveness ('find ourselves in the same conditions') as well as its Endurance in the richer, pragmatic sense described at the conclusion of the last section: through time a problem grows and entangles, taking on deeper and thicker meaning ('most prominent reflection of what happens in the city').

My substitution of Divisiveness for indirectness is key because it troubles a tendency evident in Tunjacá's commentary, in some geographical scholarship on urban publics (Iveson, 2011), and in some aspects of Dewey's writing, to imagine them as effectively consensual interest groups that share the same experiences or that have (or will discover) common interests. The mobility situation in Bogotá suggests that the most public of problems—the ones that heat up, stay heated, and keep burning over time—introduce conflicting interests and generate publics that desire for *something* to be done but not for any one resolution. In other words, what I call 'hot problems,' problems like traffic in Bogotá, are both shared and contested: they divide people together. In keeping with the previous section's arguments about pragmatic emphasis on thought as always serving practical action, I repurpose slightly STS scholar Michel Callon's (1998) notion of 'hot situations' such that hotness does not describe scientific knowledge controversies (Callon's meaning), but rather obstacles to collective flourishing that attract diverse forms of remedial energy—cooperative and combative—and insert antagonisms into the social field.

Immediacy: accessibility to awareness and intervention

Through 14 months of total research on the transportation situation in Bogotá, I recall clearly only one moment when the circulation system was functioning like Thrift's (2004) 'technological unconscious'. It was late morning, about 10:30 AM, and I was riding the underutilized K line of the TransMilenio bus rapid transit system toward the Secretary of Mobility to conduct an interview. Travelling during an *hora valle* (non-peak hour) between the morning and noon rush and in reverse of the prevailing flow from periphery to center, the mood on the bus was calm and dreamy. In a rare victory, everyone had a seat with places to spare. No venders or performers had boarded to sell, sing, rap or generally snap attention back to the here and now: to the bus, the immediate environment, the situation at hand. Because the K line is newer in system, the *losas* (cement floors) underneath were still humming smoothly, unlike almost every other road surface in the pockmarked built environment of Bogotá. The passengers around me were staring out through sun-spackled windows, indulging in the opportunity to let their minds be occupied elsewhere. In a word, the usual immediacy of the mobility situation—the way that it forces commuters to be consciously aware of their being inside of it—had blissfully rescinded, at least for the moment.

Normally when one is moving in Bogotá, one is occupied mentally at least some of the time by the immediate experience—'preoccupied' by it even, to return to the commentary by the radio host—and this 'presentness' is the first basic quality of a hotly public problem. The traffic situation is immediately, viscerally *there*, as registered in a mild-to-maximal bodily perturbation that, in turn, forces consciousness of one's

surroundings. Anyone who has worked or lived in Bogotá for even a short period will tell you that transportation in the city is very often frustratingly slow and difficult. For example, one focus group participant described getting on TransMilenio at *hora pico* (rush hour) as akin to "a game of Tetris": you must squeeze your body into what tiny space is left and you ride cramped and uncomfortable. Another focus group participant further noted with some bitterness in her voice,

> When the TransMilenio project started I remember really strongly those commercials that showed the people riding and reading. No, it turned out that in reality it's different because the streets are bad. Transport is also very delayed and there is a lot of stopping and starting. If I try to read on my phone, I get sick.

On a normal trip on the TransMilenio, then, drifting off mentally is a luxury. In general a high level of negative affective experience, and high level of awareness of that negative experience, typifies commuting. "Commuting is the least favorite part of my day," as my friend Carolina confided while we were riding the bus one day; *una mamera* and *una mierda* (an 'exhausting' and 'shitty' experience, respectively) were the two most common terms used to describe moving in Bogotá in the focus group. If 'one of the biggest problems that Bogotanos *live* today is mobility,' this 'living' begins here, in the exhausting absorption of attention by this immediate obstacle to a more flourishing life.

This immediacy makes the traffic problem different from other kinds of issues. If, as Latour (2007, p. 8), has argued, "[t]here is no cognitive, mental and affective equipment" that requires everyone to be "constantly implicated, involved, or engaged with the working of Paris sewage system, the search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, [or] the development of stem cells research in California," the same cannot be said of traffic for most Bogotanos, and indeed for many urbanites around the world. This

immediacy only becomes more visceral as congestion, pollution and immobility intensify as global urban conditions. Indeed, when Callon (1998) was writing from Paris more than 25 years ago, 'the consequences of the conjoint and interacting behavior' (Dewey, 1927) that we experience as traffic were not necessarily as immediate:

> When Parisians read in their daily newspapers that the pollution index has risen above the danger level, or illuminated signs inform the citizens of Florence that ozone concentrations are above the critical threshold, they find it easy to experience themselves either as the victims of motor traffic or conversely, as the drivers responsible for environmental pollution…The devices that allow us to visualize the existence of the externalities play a crucial role…in the formation of the groups concerned and in the growth of their self-awareness (Callon, 1998, p. 258).

By contrast, in cities like Bogotá today, no special publicity mechanisms are necessary to feel the pollution index or to know that one is a 'victim' of traffic. You can simply taste the air while you wait to squeeze yourself on a bus. The spatially and temporally displaced externalities that (used to?) typify less immediate problems like climate change require that special devices be constructed to put us in touch with them and, with hope, spur us to some kind of action. The fact that traffic congestion in Bogotá needs no mediation to make its negative presence felt goes some why to explaining why it—and not climate—is the 'hot' problem in Bogotá.

The other side of the quality of immediacy, which will become more important in later chapters that focus on public engagement, is that it is immediately accessible to material intervention on the part of the affected. Everyday, bodily implication in the problematic situation implies a transactional relationship between the physical creation of traffic and the social behavior of those embroiled in it. Mobility is close to the public, and the public has direct access to 'tinkering' with its logics. This physical immediacy

explains, again, why understanding the democratic life of publics in terms of 'knowledge controversies' around issues or matters of concern can be a limiting framework. Perhaps it is true that, when and if they are compelled to care, publics mostly 'act' on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the development of stem cells in California through the medium of talk and debate. But this is precisely because these problems are less immediate to them: they are geographically distant from most people's practical scope of action and sealed up behind impenetrable institutional, legal and political 'walls' that make direct intervention difficult. There is plenty of talk in Bogotá about traffic, to be sure, and plenty of public knowledge building. But the problem is also so immediate that this talk informs practical intervention into a problematic situation that its public literally *steps out into* each day.

Seriousness: the existential nature of the threat to flourishing

Seriousness layers atop the immediacy of the traffic problem in Bogotá to redouble the public's hyper-focus on it. At first it may seem that immediacy and seriousness name the same quality: certainly the things that annoy us bodily on a daily basis are more serious for us than those that do not. To see the distinction one can think again of climate change, a problem that is existentially serious but not immediately lived (at least yet, by most people). Conversely, in many cities in the world like the one where I live now, Minneapolis, traffic is an immediate problem but not a serious one for most people: it is can be annoying to commute and sit in traffic, but the city flows relatively well and is not (yet) flirting with total gridlock in the way Bogotá and other Southern cities are.

Interminable gridlock due to more vehicular traffic—and a life wasted sitting uncomfortably in it—is the most obviously serious, existential threat that the mobility problem poses. The average Bogotano spends 20 days per year in traffic, which breaks down to an average trip of 64 minutes and 2 hours 20 minutes per day travelling about the city (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2011). And it will likely get worse as more cars enter the system. Between 2002 and 2014, the population of Bogotá grew by 1.3 million people, in almost exact proportion to the increase in quantity of cars and motorcycles to roads in the same period (Observatorio de Movilidad, 2014). This brought the rate of motorization to 173 automobiles per 1000 inhabitants, a rate still low compared to other Latin American cities. Carlos José Herrera Jaramillo, Sub-Secretary of Mobility under Mayor Samuel Moreno, rattled off the numbers in an interview (August 28, 2014): Mexico City has 294 cars per 1000 inhabitants, Buenos Aires 320/1000 and São Paulo 465/1000. Yet Bogotá is the densest city in the Western hemisphere and mostly devoid of modern highways (World Bank, 2012); 173/1000 already creates a crushing stress on the public right-of-way. Since car ownership tends to grow with economic development and the Colombian economy (at the time of research) was booming, Herrera did not interpret this 173/1000 statistic as a 'victory' but as an ominous warning about how much car ownership could *still plausibly grow* if attractive alternative modes were not developed.

Outside of the serious threat of idling one's life away in a state of discomfort, focus group participants highlighted two other serious threats: *inseguridad* and *acoso* [insecurity and (sexual) harassment]. Bogotá is a generally dangerous and crime-ridden city, and people feel the most insecure when they are moving (Gilbert & Garcés, 2008).

One focus group participant shared this story, almost casually and at a late point in the conversation, about an incident that had occurred just the night before:

> There are a ton of robberies in transport. You are very frightened. Last night (a Friday), for example, I grabbed the last bus possible. It was almost one in the morning but it was the last (bus) to the south. And inside the bus, which was very full, some people pulled knives. The passengers were able to force them off the bus but after that the people wouldn't let the bus doors open anymore to drop people off so it was a problem. When the police came they guarded the doors but even so we went on scared, scared. I was riding in the back of the bus and this happened in the front. But the same thing happened to my friend [once] and the guys who got on the bus with knives muzzled her mouth and told everyone else on the bus that if she did not cooperate they would take all their cell phones, so in the end my friend had to pay them.

Many people I met in Bogotá could recount equally terrifying stories of being robbed or threatened on the street, and there was some evidence the problem was worsening. In 2011 only 3.8% of TransMilenio users said they had been the victims of a crime on the system, whereas in 2013 11.3% of people reported they had (Observatorio de Movilidad, 2014). A Thompson Reuters poll (*El Espectador*, 2016) found that 60% of women felt insecure in public transport, making buses in Bogotá the most insecure in the world for women in their study.

Buses were major sites of insecurity, but other mobility modes were not exempt. In taxis, a quiet staple of middle class mobility, there is always the threat of the infamous 'paseo millonario' (millionaire's trip). A paseo millonario happens when a taxi driver circulating in what is (presumably) an unlicensed cab abducts a customer with the help of accomplices, drugs and/or beats them, and drives them from ATM to ATM to withdraw money during an ordeal that can last well over 24 hours. Walkers and bikers too face the threat of robbery, and face an additional risk of being hit by vehicles. Despite an official

road hierarchy in which these modes should have the right-of-way and respect of motorists, careful vigilance against aggressive drivers for whom 'might makes right' must always obtain: 286 pedestrians and 56 cyclists were killed in traffic in Bogotá in 2014 alone (Observatorio de Movilidad, 2014).

Faced with these serious threats to well-being, Bogotá commuters were not only immediately aware of their situation when moving but also continually strategizing and calculating to find ways to move as securely, comfortably, and quickly as possible. What is important to point out about 'seriousness' is that it implies that a public is not simply focused on the situation in the present, but actively inquiring into it with an eye toward gaining a more satisfying relation with the situation. At one point during the focus group we were huddled over a map discussing how participants moved and why, and the conversation had turned to cycling, which has emerged as a popular way to move in the last 10 years in Bogotá, especially among the hip and young (Figure 5). One participant explained her strategizing around where, how and why (not) to use a bicycle vis-à-vis other modes:

Figure 5: Young bikers maneuver the streets in central Bogotá. Photo by Pilar Salcedo.

> I would like to bike, but I live here, yes? (pointing to a location in southwestern fringes of the city). This is the block where I live. I take taxis a lot, but I don't

> always have the resources. When I don't have money, I have to go in TransMilenio. So I get the TransMilenio here on the autopista towards the south, yes, up to 30th?...anyway it's the same route as the cicloruta (bicycle lane). The cicloruta runs all the way along 30th. And I would get on the bike here and take it up to Usaquillo. But this whole route along 30th is very tough. Here it's very dangerous. Here (pointing to a spot on the route) is very dangerous, 19th, for the bicycle…in fact, there are one, two, three, four bridges where (because of steepness) I have to get on the bicycle and get off, get on and get off. And there are lots of people around watching…They are waiting to rob us! Yes. In the day by each bridge there is a police officer. But when one has to return at night, after 5 pm, there are no police. So it's better to leave the bike (at home).

What we see in this passage is the focus group participant vigilantly considering the mobility situation and displaying an impressive knowledge of urban geography organized around an imagination of a landscape of risk. Given the seriousness of the threats, my focus group participants had very conscious strategies for accommodating a changeable situation. Traffic is immediately there, but its seriousness keeps people motivated to experiment, strategize and inquire: to try out different ways of moving, pay attention to the results, and to adjust behavior as a consequence.

Extensiveness: the scale of affectedness

Immediate and serious problems draw and maintain the attention of the affected. Yet private problems also have these qualities, and the examples above cite primarily private practices of coping. In order to become public, serious and immediate problems must also, fundamentally, be extensive—shared among a group. For Dewey, extension has two aspects: the scope of affectedness and the scope of response, and the latter will be dealt with explicitly in the coming chapters. In terms of scope of affectedness, for Dewey the extension of social and technical life over space and time entangles people into relationships of cause and effect, and in particular into relationships in which actions

have all sorts of indirect consequences. Extensiveness refers to the geographical remit of mutual imbrication in the negative externalities of a problem, or in the consequences that are not of one's making. Public problems therefore have a political definition: they put people into relations of co-affectedness not in a legal, but in a socio-ontological sense (Marres 2007).

My argument throughout the dissertation might be summed up in the idea that if Bogotanos are *de jure* citizens of Bogotá D.C., they are *de facto* citizens of the 'political environment' of traffic, where they find their lives organically and intensely intertwined with those of others. The relationship between the political boundaries of Bogotá and the boundaries of affectedness in the traffic problem (the geographical remit of lived consequences) are important to consider. Bogotá D.C. is an unusually large Capital District where, unlike in most major urbanized areas in the world, the majority of the metropolitan population is governed together in a sprawling administrative unit. More than 8 million official "Bogotanos" live within the boundaries of Bogotá D.C. among its 20 official *localidades*, while only about 2 million more 'metropolitanos' live in surrounding municipalities functionally tied to the urban core. Planners generally measure the 'functional ties' that delineate metropolitan areas by commuter patterns, or what are sometimes called 'commuter watersheds': the extension of daily patterns of in- and out-migration to and from the urban core.

By rule the extent of a problem is determined in practice—a problem exists only virtually until a public discovers itself and struggles over a definition of the nature and scope of its affectedness. The Bogotá 'metropolitan area' concept amounts to

governmental definition of the functional area of the traffic problem, but it provides a decent working idea of the extension of affectedness: 10 million people, initiating an average of 800,000 trips per hour on workdays across all modes (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2011). This number is probably exaggerated to the extent that it includes children who are not 'subjects' of the problem in the same way as adults, although certainly most children must move and public officials in Bogotá told me of how organizing the 'school run' was one of the city's most desperate mobility challenges. One might also argue that a percentage of that 10 million could be older or otherwise immobile people, but neither does this necessarily 'exclude' them from the problem either. Indeed, my research suggested that immobilizing, or more often limiting one's mobility, was another tactic that Bogotanos adopted in *relation to* the traffic problem. Opening storefront operations on the first floors of their homes and only travelling to the city center on Sundays, if at all, were two strategies that Bogotanos living in the peripheral area of Ciudad Bolívar reported when I conducted a small focus group there in April 2015.

The boundaries of affected interests rarely (if ever) align with the political boundaries of a city or nation state, or with those of a social or identitarian group (unless discrimination against that group *is* the problem). Dewey was interested in the implications for democratic politics of the geographical extension and increasing functional complexity of social relationships in an era of rapid industrialization, technological advancement, and emergent globalization. He saw the proliferation of 'oddly-shaped' problems, concomitant with the proliferation of communicative media (see Chapter 4), as creating new challenges for politics but also new democratic

opportunities. This is why Deweyan ideas are often invoked in theories of transnational politics that consider how contemporary issues spill over jurisdictions and borders (Fraser, 2007).

Part of the problem for transnational publics is that they do not share jurisdictions or cultures and the 'community' of the affected is not concentrated in space. Cities, then, are interesting pragmatic political spaces because they exhibit the opposite quality: as nodes in networks of flows and exchanges, they concentrate externalities and globalization's effects. At the same time, living together densely creates consequences of its own, as the existence of a distinctive set of urban problems/'problems of the town' (Foucault, 1978) attests. Urban social movement theorists have noted that everyday life in cities is a critical realm of "lived space," to borrow Lefebvre's terminology, and shared experiences around which movements frequently mobilize (Miller & Nicholls, 2013), and it is reasonable to think that, similarly, spatially concentrated problems experienced among neighbors might be more likely to 'heat up'. Thus, in fleshing out the concept of extension as a quality of public problems, we might think of it as referring not just to the 'sharedness' of problems but to the density or distribution of their effects and to the consequences of this distribution on the public's ability to discover itself and its interests.

Divisiveness: the antagonism among the affected

"Transportation is interesting because we all find ourselves in the same conditions." Recall the quote from Natalia Tunjacá of the CCB, which implies that Bogotanos are 'in' the traffic problem in the same way. Dewey certainly understood that "work on problems is often conflictual or contested and that agonism is part of the grain

of everyday experience" (Bridge, 2014, p. 1655). But his imagination that the kinds of consequences that organized publics were 'indirect'—i.e. produced by a set of actors completely distinct from those that suffer them—perhaps biased him toward imagining that what he sometimes called a 'community' of the affected (a public) had a more homogenous and experience and were more likely to discover common interest. Dewey understood problems through the public economics concept of 'externalities': situations where consequences of external action are not born by its producers and are absorbed as harms by wholly innocent parties 'downstream,' like a polluting factory sending its detritus towards an unsuspecting town downriver. Yet 'what is interesting about transportation' in Bogotá politically, in my view, is that it holds together as a common situation that "worries all us of Bogotanos" (to return to the radio host) in spite of the fact that the affected are positioned jointly and *antagonistically* with respect to it (see also Marres 2007 on this point). Bogotanos are not indirectly implicated in the action of others, but directly so. They suffer the consequences of action in which they are direct participants—albeit forced and not necessarily 'culpable' ones.

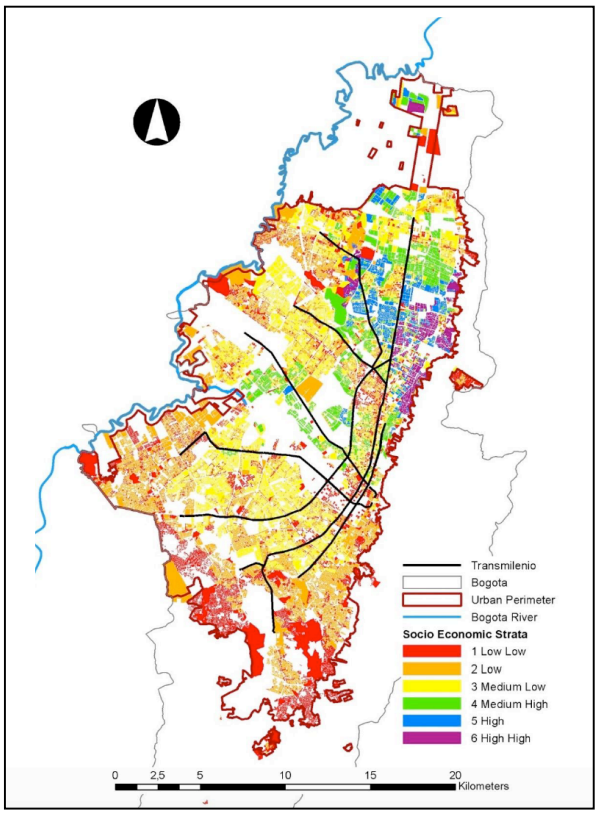

Figure 6: Social Stratification in Bogotá. Source: World Bank (2012).

Bogotanos are divided together in traffic: they have different experiences in it and they have developed different interests with respect to its governance that are often conflictual. My interviews with subjects living in peripheral neighborhoods (see Figure 6), for example, certainly undermined Tunjacá's universalistic sentiments. Here is Alexander, a *rapero* (performer of rap songs) who I met in April 2015 on a *colectivo* (informal bus):

> They say TransMilenio changed the city. Maybe in the nice looking parts. For us in the South its horrible, just an awful service. The worst. It's dangerous, there are thieves, women get groped, there are drunks. And they charge 1,800 pesos. Have you ever been to Portal Tunal? It's horrible, inhuman the crowds…

Focusing on his experiences of TransMilenio in particular, Alexander invoked a very different mobility 'we' than did Tunjacá. This is a 'we' for whom the 1,800 peso fare (about $1 US Dollar) is a substantial sum and for whom the TransMilenio service is even *less* sufferable.

Similarly, Diego Pachón of Ruedala Usme, a bicycle activist group, described a situation in his southern *localidad* of Usme where mobility and other urban resources are severely restricted compared to other areas of the city:

> Usme is the barrio with the most deficits in infrastructure, for transportation but also for sports or culture, health. We don't have hospitals, universities, technical centers, sports centers, *or* bicycle infrastructure. Usme, Ciudad Bolívar, Bosa, Kennedy, Fontibon, maybe San Cristobal, are the *localidades* that deliver all the workers to Bogotá. All of the vehicle traffic originates in the South of the city. In spite of the rhetoric of integration and total inclusion and democracy that accompanied the TransMilenio and SITP [see Chapter 2], these are systems that are not actually designed for the workers of the city from the South…

As with Alexander, the mobility public with which Pachón identifies is distinctly Southern and poor and faces a very different reality than a resident of the wealthy North when they walk out the door. Yet Pachón gestures toward another notable feature of traffic: the way it compels interaction between rich and poor. On the one hand, and unlike with other urban services like education, elites cannot buy their way out of it: they may use private vehicles more and the bus less (Figure 7) but they are resolutely 'in the mix' and compelled to use the same public right-of-way as everyone else. On the other hand, the southern localidades "deliver all the workers" to the major employment centers of the city—the central, wealthier areas—meaning the poor are bodily present in and among the elites. Bogotanos do *not* find themselves in the same condition, and yet somehow they also do: the integrity of the larger 'situation' holds. There is recognizably a singular 'thing'—mobility in Bogotá—in which rich and poor folks are co-implicated and that they can discuss and act upon, even as that reality is demonstrably different for all parties.

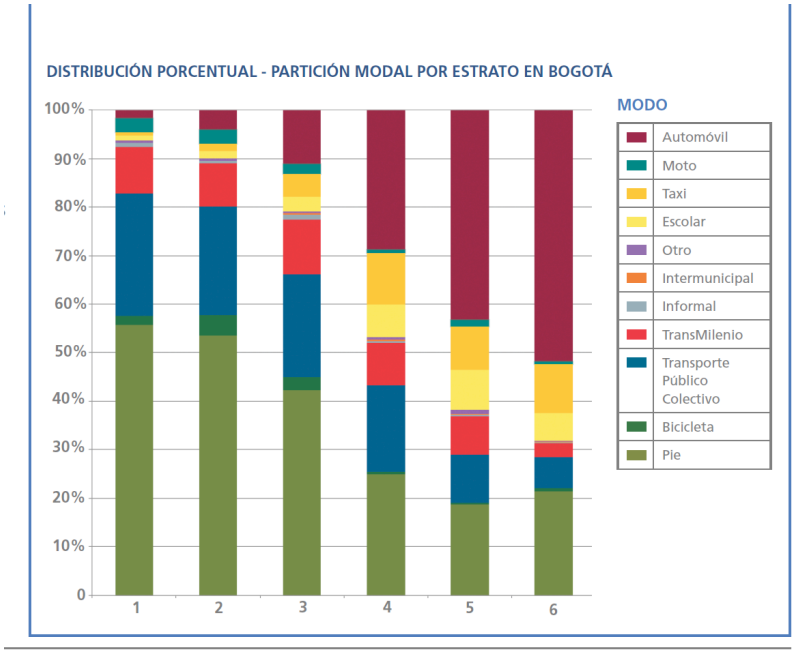

Figure 1: Distribution of trips by mode and *estrato*. Estrato 6s, represented by the column on the far left, travel by personal vehicle more than half the time. Source: Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá (2011).

It is not just commuters who are positioned differently with respect to the traffic, but workers as well. The mobility problem is effectively Bogotá's largest producer of employment—from planners to bus drivers to mechanics to the street vendors that linger near bus stops—and the interests of these workers often cluster around the fortunes of certain modes. Transportation is organized as a hodgepodge of formal and informal modalities, including the TransMilenio, bicycles, various legal and illegal taxi modes, two smaller bus systems (one old, one new) and, of course, cars and 'motos' (motorcycles)—the elements whose healthy annual growth threatens to plunge Bogotá into further congestion. One percent of all Bogotanos—an estimated 10,000 people—are cab drivers, and another 10,000 are bicycle taxi drivers. TransMilenio is one of the city's largest employers. When the city tries to improve mobility by changing infrastructure, introducing new modalities and excluding or retiring others, this places workers in antagonistic positions.

Much more will be said of dissensualities and antagonisms in the next chapter. For now, the point can be summarized by noting that what Latour (2005a) has written of objects can be readily be ascribed to public problems as well:

> It's clear that each ~~object—each issue—~~[problem] generates a different pattern of emotions and disruptions, of disagreements and agreements. There might be no continuity, no coherence in our opinions, but there is a hidden continuity and a hidden coherence in what we are attached to. Each ~~object~~ [problem] gathers around itself a different assembly of relevant parties. Each ~~object~~ [problem] triggers new occasions to passionately differ and dispute (p. 5, my edits).

Problematic situations open a space in which claims and counter claims, action and counteractions, can proliferate (Barnett, 2007). There is no common good resolution, no

way of instituting a 'regime a satisfaction' to obviate the problem that would be equally satisfying to all parts. This divisiveness and struggle makes the problem 'hotter.'

Endurance: the persistence of the problem

As I noted in the Introduction to the dissertation, the problem of mobilizing Bogotá has existed since the origins of the city and has steadily worsened through rapid urban expansion and decades of governmental neglect in the middle and late decades of the 20th Century. In those years there were other preoccupying—i.e. immediate, serious, extensive, divisive and enduring—problems like war and internal conflict; as several current transport activists hypothesized, there was perhaps simply little public capacity to be attentive to traffic. Since the 2000s, however, security has improved in the city and there has been a concerted (if not entirely successful) and highly publicized effort to reform mobility on the part of state, citizens and publics (as we will see through the next three chapters). What is important about this history for our present purposes is simply that the history exists: when confronting traffic, one confronts a situation that has been structured intimately by previous attempts to solve the problem—infrastructures already built or neglected, practices habituated, laws enacted, discourses circulated.

Although recognizably the same 'political object,' in other words, the transportation problem has also shifted and changed and modified to become, today, totally different from what it once was. As the 'transactions' between the society and the problem grow, the problem becomes more complex and entangled. As Burke (2000, p. 26) put it, a "problem has an immediately accessible face on it—how it appears to and thus how it is for that agent in the given instance," but it can also be "existentially and

modally 'thick'…deep, directed, tensive, conative, impulsive, dynamic, changing, etc." Situations are charged with accumulations of long-gathering energy as the past is carried into the present so as to expand and deepen the content of the latter. From just another urban inconvenience to be suffered, the mobility problem has grown to become 'too politicized to govern,' as some planners and administrators I spoke with complained. "Mayors are now primarily judged for transport," as the planner and bicycle activist Carlosfelipe Pardo told me (Interview, December 3, 2014), and behind the "concrete, surface-level, visible reality" that makes transportation an easy referent, it has become intensely saturated with public history and symbolism such that "nothing that happens with respect to mobility is just about mobility."

One of the first things I noticed in my research in Bogotá was how much the average Bogotano seemed to know about this saturated history. To return the discussion to the quality of Immediacy with which the section opened, this deepening web of events and figures and meanings could be conjured at the slightest provocation. Riding along *Avenida Caracas* one day with my friend Carolina—the one who referred to commuting as the "worst part of her day,"—we dropped into a big pothole on one of those dilapidated TransMilenio losas (see Figure X). Rolling her eyes as we recovered our balance, Carolina was reminded to share a story. Enrique Peñalosa, the mayor who developed the first TransMilenio line we were riding on, was widely thought to have siphoned funds from the project. This graft resulted in the losas being made more thinly and cheaply than they should have been, such that they could not support the heavy traffic of buses and quickly broke down.

Figure 2: The broken *losas* of the TransMilenio Caracas line. Photo by Pilar Salcedo

This history of mayoral theft from transportation infrastructure continued with the recently completed third phase of the system, Carolina went on, which opened 3 years behind schedule in 2010 and mired in scandal. Investigations revealed that then-Mayor Samuel Moreno had siphoned the equivalent of 1 million U.S. dollars from the project as part of the so-called Carrusel de La Contratación (Carousel of Contracts)—a criminal conspiracy which eventually implicated other notable politicians, businessmen, and directors of the Instituto de Desarrollo Urbano (Urban Development Institute). Moreno ended up in jail before he completed his term. For Carolina and other Bogotanos I spoke with, the broken losas were symbols and manifestations of the history of public sector corruption in Bogotá that is inseparable from—or perhaps rolled up into—the mobility situation. And bumping along everyday to and from work and school, a jolt on the bus might always jolt the mind to awareness, not just of the present experience but of all the entangled history that constitutes the mobility problem.

Conclusion: 'It might be objected…'

It might be objected that I have over-emphasized the 'hotness' and publicness of problems. What of the problematic situation that generates nothing—no remedial attention from the state and dissensus (Chapter 2), no political subjectivity (Chapter 3) and no public(s) (Chapter 4)? I have two points to make about this. The first is that Dewey's 'political ontology' of the problematic, summed up in the commonsensical idea that political life organizes itself around the problems that affect us, is more properly a conjunctural analysis oriented toward understanding conditions and possibilities for self-determination in formally liberal-democratic societies. In other words, even though Dewey's populism led him to distrust the state as elitist, ham-handed, and often at cross purposes with the interests of 'the people' (his emergent public), his political philosophy also implicitly assumes a broadly liberal-democratic institutional arena within which, at minimum, the rule of law and liberal rights of expression and assembly generally obtain. In other words, problems materializing in authoritarian, oppressive or anti-liberal societies—even where they are Immediate, Serious, Extensive, Divisive, and Enduring—might not be expected to generate the same intensity of engagement.

Second, even *within* broadly liberal-democratic institutional contexts, there is no guarantee that any problems, regardless of their qualities, will be discovered or generate political energy. An example of a problem that has failed to generate sustained public interest in Bogotá despite its seriousness is urban flooding. Exacerbated by climate change, Bogotá is seeing large increases in rainfall, especially during unpredictable La Niña periods. The last La Niña in 2010-2011 overflowed rivers and streams and

destroyed hundreds of homes in concentrated zones of the city in both rich and poor neighborhoods. These disturbances have been handled largely by private means and (unlike traffic) the floods and the threat of future floods holds little place in public dialogue or the city's policy priorities. If traffic is very publically present, the impact of floods has been forceful but fleeting. According to the logic put forth in this chapter, the Immediacy, Endurance and Divisiveness of traffic might be understood to partially account for its central place in public and cultural politics in Bogotá.

Dewey's major concern in *The Public and Its Problems* was that most problems, like urban flooding, would never find dynamic publics:

> The machine age has so enormously expanded, multiplied, intensified and complicated the scope of indirect consequences, has formed such immense and consolidated unions in action, on an impersonal rather than a community basis, that the resultant public cannot identify and distinguish itself. And this discovery is obviously an antecedent condition of any effective organization on its part (1927, p. 126).

Dewey thought there would be more opportunities for democratic exploration as well as for political conflict as people become more complexly entangled socio-technically, but he worried that problems would not find their publics and be condemned to an inchoate and unstable existences. Complex technological societies "join people in a mutuality that is not primarily manifest in their own common recognition of it but instead can operate, as it were, behind their backs" (Calhoun, 2002, p. 161). Problems big and small exist virtually for Dewey until they are discovered, and nothing is guaranteed: their fates are uncertain and depend on the contingencies of the social response. With this idea I turn to Chapter 2 and a discussion of the recent history of state intervention on the mobility problem in Bogotá.

CHAPTER TWO **Mobility and Dissensuality**

Last chapter, I framed traffic as a problematic situation that divides Bogotanos together while presenting an obstacle to their collective flourishing. In this chapter, I consider state efforts to resolve the mobility problem by instituting an infrastructural solution in the 'common good'. These governmental efforts have consolidated over the last decades into a totalizing vision for transport reform: el *Sistema Integrado de Transporte Público*, or the SITP. As Bogotá City Council President Miguel Uribe Turbay (interview, Feb. 27 2015) told me, "The goal of the SITP is not only that a single transportation system move all the people in Bogotá, but also that we eliminate all the older systems of transportation." Yet the SITP has been met with myriad resistances and disagreements among the Bogotá public and their elected representatives.[6]

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[6] Dewey was not a theorist of the state or of state power, and this dissertation likewise steers wide of the question of the state. Dewey's brief writing on the subject, contained largely in *The Public and Its Problems* (1954), was consistent with his problem-oriented political ontology and consequentialist methodology; idiosyncratic compared with other political theories; and unsatisfying in a number of ways.

For Dewey, states—like political subjects and publics—are consequences of the existence of problematic situations. "We take our point of departure," he writes, "the objective fact that human acts have consequences upon others, that some of these consequences are perceived, and that their perception leads to subsequent effort to control action so as to secure some consequences and to avoid others" (ibid, p. 12). The state is, for Dewey, effectively an ossified public: "The state is the organization of the public effected through officials for the protection of the interests shared by members… Recognition of evil consequences brought about a common interest which required for its maintenance certain measures and rules, together with the selection of certain persons as their guardians, interpreters, and, if need be, their executors" (p. 33).

In writing this, Dewey aims to counter absolutist theories of the state with something more value-neutral in its basic definition. "According to one tradition, which claims to derive from Aristotle, the state is associated and harmonized life lifted to its highest potency…[Another] view has it that the state is organized oppression, at once a social excrescence, a parasite and a tyrant" (5). Dewey seeks to replace these with the simple and, he believes, universal proposition that states arise when shared consequences of conjoint behavior are institutionally regulated toward some end (infrastructures, it might be noted, are states by this definition). "This conception of statehood," he is careful to note, "does not imply any belief as to the propriety or reasonableness of any particular political act, measure or system", and indeed since "there is no a priori rule which can be laid down and by which when it is followed a good state will be brought into existence…the formation of states must be an experimental process" (see conclusion on experimentalism) (pgs. 27, 33).

In his defense, Dewey is not quite as naïve as all these seems. He is aware that states usually fail to actually *operate* in the public interest: "as all political history shows, the power and prestige which attend command of official position render rule something to be grasped and exploited for its own sake.

Analyzing these developments, the chapter intervenes in debates about democracy and 'dissensuality' in urban geography. I take up arguments about the purported consolidation of 'consensual governing conditions' around urban environmental problems (Swyngedouw 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b) and the related association of proper democratic practice with dissensual activity (Staeheli, 2010), arguing that geographers' anxieties over consensuality might be over-stated—certainly with respect to the mobility in Bogotá, and perhaps generally. I further suggest that there are important theoretical and practical limitations to conflating democracy with anti-hegemonic and anti-consensual revolt and something vital in the pragmatism's insistence that the 'democratic question' is ultimately one of collective self-organization (Barnett, 2014).

The first section of the chapter outlines arguments in 'radical'/post-structural democratic theory that a post-political condition has enveloped urban spaces and societies. In the second section, I detail the SITP, the totalizing infrastructural solution to traffic forwarded by a plurality of Bogotá's planners and mobility experts. Under the heading of 'Difficult Populations,' the third section illustrates several modalities through which Bogotanos fail to agree in mind, body or both with the SITP as the transportation

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Power to govern is distributed by accident of birth or by the possession of qualities which enable a person to obtain office, but which are quite irrelevant to the performance of its representative functions" (p. 30). Yet he ignores completely the history of colonial states and other imported and quite obviously 'inorganic' governmental bodies, seeming to feel instead that state forms always arise *in situ* in problematic conditions before they become stale and corrupted. In short, and problematically, Dewey thinks the problem with states is that they are dumb and unresponsive to change rather than that they are violent and/or imposed upon populations who are not publics.

In sum, Dewey's 'organicist' theory of the state, like his theory of public engagement, assumes the existence of a vaguely democratic social condition or legal architecture as an unacknowledged precondition. Dewey critiques other political theorists who he feels reify "The State" as a universal entity and do not recognize the spatio-temporal contingency of different state forms (p. vi). Yet he does not seem to grasp the spatio-temporal locatedness of his *own* state theory.

solution for the city, naming these 'vision dissonance,' the '*doble moral*' (double moral), 'doubtful enrollment,' and 'open resistance.' The chapter concludes by considering what kinds of democratic theories might be useful to illuminate the disorganized and non-hegemonized mobility situation in Bogotá. Traffic, I suggest, is a problem that begs a very pragmatic question, and a difficult one philosophically and practically: If the SITP is unfair and undesirable, as many Bogotanos insist, what would a just and democratic approach to governing mobility actually consist in?

Urban democracy and dissensus

The geographer Eric Swyngedouw has generated substantial debate with his claims that both global environmental problems (2009, 2010a) and cities and their problems (2009, 2010b, 2011a) are increasingly governed consensually and that a 'consensual condition' has set in in the public sphere (see also O'Callahan et. al, 2014; Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012; MacLeod, 2013; Davidson and Iveson 2015a, 2015b for derivative arguments). With respect to climate change, Swyngedouw suggests that a global consensus has emerged both on the nature of the problem and on the managerial and institutional technologies that should be deployed to mitigate its consequences, despite the continued existence of minor differences of viewpoint or opinion. Thus the elevation of the climate problem to the terrain of public concern has unfolded, for Swyngedouw, in parallel with the consolidation of a political condition that has evacuated dispute and disagreement from the spaces of public encounter and been replaced by a consensually established frame that post-structuralist political theorists like

Slavoj Žižek, Jacques Rancière and Chantal Mouffe define as 'post-democratic' or 'post-political' (Mouffe, 2005; Rancière, 2006; Žižek, 1999).

With respect to urban spaces, for Swyngedouw (2010b, p. 3) it is "unmistakably so that the city has undergone radical change over the past two decades or so, most dramatically in its modes of urban governing and polic(y)ing," whereby governance arrangements have been consolidated that consensually shape the city according to the "dreams, tastes and needs of the transnational economic, political, and cultural elites."

> While the city is alive and thriving at least in some of its spaces, the polis, conceived in the idealized Greek sense as the site for public political encounter and democratic negotiation, the spacing of (often radical) dissent and disagreement, and the place where political subjectivation emerges and literally takes place, seems moribund (Swyngedouw, 2011a, p. 5).

This 'suturing of the political' through consensual techno-managerial governance characteristic of post-democracy/post-politics in cities reduces political conflict and disagreement to either an 'ultra-politics' of radical and violent protest or to a 'para-political inclusion' of impotent participatory mechanisms that permit the airing of a diversity of opinions provided these do not question fundamentally the existing state of the neoliberal political-economic configuration or the social order (Swyngedouw, 2011b).

The post-structuralist democratic theories of Žižek, Rancière and Mouffe upon which Swyngedouw's arguments build are organized around a basic division between 'the political', or the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations, and 'politics' (the 'police' for Rancière) on the other side, which indicates the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions which seek to establish social order and—purportedly in the era of 'post-politics'—to eradicate or invisibilize those antagonisms.

Rancière's 'police order' describes a hegemonic process that encapsulates most of what is thought of as 'politics as usual': the actions of bureaucracies, parliaments, and courts and all sanctioned political participation and public sphere discussion and debate, which Rancière views as carefully managed and typically oriented toward building consensus and therefore symptomatic of the absence of the political (Rancière, 2010).

This post-democratic order also revolves around a consensual arrangement among the general population in which all those that are named and counted participate within a given and generally accepted social and spatial distribution of things and people. In other words, in order to make the unequal conditions constitutive of the police order acceptable as 'natural,' the police order appears as what Rancière calls an 'aesthetic regime' or 'partition of sensible' within which "there is no contest on what appears, on what is given in a situation as a situation…consensus means that whatever your personal commitments, interests and values may be, you perceive the same things, you give them the same name" (Rancière, 2003, p. 4). While there may be conflicts of interest and opinion in policed urban geographies, there is widespread agreement over the conditions that exist, who the relevant parties are, and the general frame of what should be done. Excluded from this partition are the 'part with no part' (see Chapter 3) —those whose 'equality as speaking beings' is denied such they have no place in the social hierarchy and no access to either democratic mechanisms and their own self-representation in political life. The properly political/democratic moment happens when the excluded express their disagreement with their exclusion and unsettle the constituted, unjust order.

Geographers like Swyngedouw and Davidson and Iveson who write on Rancière, Žižek, and Mouffe take a 'mix-and-stir' approach to these theorists' work. In so doing they leave some issues muddied with respect to the post-political. One of these is whether 'post-political' describes a conjunctural moment associated with the consolidation of neoliberal hegemony or whether 'post-political' describes, in general, societies that are hierarchized (i.e. all societies) where the natural equality of all people is denied and where most political relations, events and struggles do not operate to fundamentally destabilize that hierarchy. In other words, what Jodi Dean (2009) argues are the two wings in post-political theory get entangled: the one that refers to the trouble with an ideal of consensus, inclusion, and administration that must be rejected wherever and whenever in favor of fostering agonistic and dissensual practice that disrupts unjust order (which she ascribes to Mouffe and Rancière), and the one that refers to the contemporary exclusion or foreclosure of the political in the neoliberal moment (which she ascribes to Žižek and Wendy Brown).

Relatedly, it is never clear how secure the grip of the police/the consensual is supposed to be within the social body or how 'deeply' it is supposed to touch. On the one hand, there is an ontological argument at play that claims, essentially, that all known societies are ordered (policed) through a 'partition of the sensible' that marks an unspoken set of logics rendering some claims, identities and possible futures recognizable while silencing others. On the other hand, there is an empirical argument about the post-political condition as a modality of contemporary governance that proceeds *as though* there were consensus and some propositions were beyond reasonable question. Do the

partition of the sensible and the post-political modality of governance name two perspectives on the same phenomenon or qualitatively different ones? Is the problem that rule is happening *as though* there were consensus such that socially-manifested antagonisms are denied reality within a consensus-oriented liberal-democratic machinery (Derickson, 2016), or is it that antagonisms has been effectively suppressed and erased from the general consciousness so social actors *are* policed and their capacities of perception, speech, and recognition kept within certain consensual bounds?

Regardless, whether we understand post-politics in a more conjunctural or more ontological way, what I want to highlight here is how these theories sanction a view of 'properly political/democratic action' as defined by practices of dissensus, resistence or disturbance of imposed orders 'from below' by a narrowly defined set of political actors. The animating anxiety behind these theories, that there is some sort of mechanism or condition in operation that enforces deep social and political consensuses leads to what is, perhaps, an over-valorization of dissensual moments and actions. Swyngedouw (2011b) understands 'proper politics' in terms of the nurturing of disagreement through properly constructed material and symbolic spaces for dissensual public encounter and exchange. As the geographer Lynn Staeheli (2010) notes, as 'radical' post-structuralist viewpoints have gained favor within critical urban geography more broadly, it has become common to conceptualize democracy in such terms, as "process through which agonism is expressed and action is taken," where agonism is defined as "disrupting what seem to be settled relationships and practices as new people, voices, and ideas enter the public sphere" (Staeheli, 2010, p. 69).

The following discussion shows that although there exists a hegemonic ambition for the traffic problem in Bogotá in the form of the SITP and around which mobility experts have rallied, consensuality within the state, among the governing class, and among the public is far from consolidated. Indeed, the SITP is simply creating more disagreement and resistance about 'what appears in the situation,' and 'difficult populations' abound, from the casually dissonant to the fully resistant, who refuse to adhere to the consensual infrastructural solutions that the state has tried to institute. My argument is not at a denial of radical democratic theorists' claims, such as those of Chantal Mouffe (2005), that agonism and conflict are ineluctable elements in working towards opportunities for self-development and gaining the rights to inhabit place and participate in decisions affecting places—which is to say, ineluctable elements in democratic life. My provocation is instead that all of this conversation around post-politics might be organized around misplaced anxiety about the evacuation of 'real' disagreement, itself based on an unrealistic sense of what it would take, practically, to create and enforce the kinds of consensual conditions that post-structuralist theories worry over. This misplaced anxiety may lead to a fixation on the dissensual moment of democratic process to the inclusion of inventive, experimental, and collaborative moments that are equally essential to meaningful, egalitarian change.

The Integrated Public Transport System (SITP)

A week after arriving in Bogotá on July 27, 2014, to begin extended fieldwork, the headlines in local newspapers were announcing that Mayor Gustavo Petro had

proposed a major transformation to the transportation system. The proposal was that TransMilenio S.A., the institution that manages the city's BRT system of the same name should be transformed into the *Empresa Gestora del Transporte Integrado de Bogotá S. A.*—the Management Company of Integrated Transport of Bogotá. This new entity would be in charge of the planning, management and organization of the whole urban and regional public transit system, including all buses (little SITP and TransMilenio), cable cars, commuter trains, and the long-awaited Metro (Figure 9). The whole multi-modal transit apparatus—the Integrated Public Transport System in its full form—is what I will refer to in this chapter as the 'big SITP'. This is to distinguish it from the 'little SITP' (confusingly referred to popularly as simply 'el SITP'), which refers to the small-size city buses that Bogotá is currently rolling out to replace the decades-old, more informally-organized Transporte Colectivo Público (TPC or *buseta*)—a transformation that is a key element of the 'big SITP' project. If consolidated, the big SITP and it's centralized governing entity would become the largest employer in Bogotá and one of the biggest businesses in Colombia.

Figure 3: The diverse transit modes of the SITP. Source: sitp.gov.co.

Indeed, as Javier Hernandez, the chief architect of the little SITP told me (interview, September 25, 2014), the little SITP alone was the most ambitious public transportation project in the world at the time. It meant the production and organization of a float of more than 12,000 new buses delivering 6 million trips and collecting 2.6 billion Colombian pesos per day (about $1.4 million), as well as the forced removal of thousands of *TPC* buses from the system.

The 'big SITP' represents at once the centralization, reorganization, modernization, and formalization of mobility patterns in Bogotá. Bogotá's Mobility Master Plan of 2006 officially framed the project for the first time in Article 19, which called for the city to "integrate in an interdependent and hierarchized manner the different modes of transportation with the infrastructures of mobility, keeping as structural axis the public transportation system" (cited in González Trujillo, 2013, p. 12). Because the goal of the big SITP is, to again quote Bogotá City Council President Miguel Uribe, "not only that a single transportation system move all the people in Bogotá, but also that we

Figure 4: Several generations of urban transportation in Bogotá. The old buseta is seen in far right lane behind a taxi and, in the left lanes, two TransMilenio buses. Photo: Pilar Salcedo.

eliminate all the older systems of transportation," it's successful implementation requires the insertion of a broad hegemony in traffic. Bogotá commuters, mobility workers and voters need to agree in mind and body, and in perpetuity, that the SITP—a project promulgated by transportation experts and political elites—is the right collective solution, even when their immediate interests and desires point to alternative ways of being, organizing and moving. To be implemented and begin functioning correctly, I show in this section, the big SITP requires that Bogotanos behave in a certain way, vote a certain way, care about and believe in a certain version of the 'common good,' and be convinced that the SITP embodies and will deliver it.

The big SITP's new hierarchization of mobility is targeted, in particular, at inverting the dominance of the automobile—in planning, in culture, and on the streets—in order to privilege shared, public and non-motorized modalities. The ambition to marginalize automobiles by providing better and faster alternatives has been central to the contemporary era of transportation reform in Bogotá: Mayor Enrique Peñalosa liked to quip that 'a developed city is not one where the poor move about in cars, but rather one where the rich use public transportation' (Walljaspar, 2010). Yet the SITP encompasses other goals and normative dimensions besides marginalizing automobiles. It tries to usher in a political and cultural shift from 'transport' to 'mobility' that we see to varying degrees across the world's cities today under the influence of a now-universalized mobility planning doctrine (Sosa Lopez, 2013). This is a shift from imagining public transportation—and transportation infrastructure in general—as a machinery for moving people from 'A to B' as quickly as possible, to one that understands transport as a key

node through which a host of social goals might be efficaciously pursued: public health, fair and formalized employment, environmental sustainability, and sociality and conviviality. As González Trujillo (2013) put it of Bogotá's mobility reforms, "this transformation goes much further than physical works, and is defining a new relationship between and among the city and its inhabitants." Although situated in a historical context marked by the critical problem of traffic congestion and long commute times, mobility policy seeks a common good solution that puts the population in balance with the environment as well as a rational use of space that would ensure quality conditions of life (ibid). In Bogotá, this transition was marked institutionally in 2006 when the Secretary of Transport was renamed the Secretary of Mobility.

In addition to deep cultural changes, the SITP demands political continuity from what is a volatile democratic system and electorate in Bogotá. The self-understanding of SITP advocates is often that this kind of multi-modal solution is rational and apolitical. At a public event I attended at the University of Rosario in April 2015 in the run-up to the 2016 mayoral election, for example, a series of presenters debated the question "What Kind of Mayor Does Bogotá Need?" A representative of urban activist group Combo 2600 argued that mobility policy represents a '3rd Way' that transcends the right/left political divide. New York City, he noted, is run by Michael Bloomberg, one of the richest Americans with a 'right' discourse, while Paris is run by a Socialist, but both cities have pursued multi-modal, car-marginalizing mobility policies to great effect. What is necessary for Bogotá to move forward with SITP and mobility policy, Combo 2600 argued, is political continuity. This requirement of political consensus—to "construir

sobre lo construido" or build on the already built—is something I heard repeatedly from mobility professionals in Bogotá. In a city where the mayor has almost unilateral power to steer policy and consecutive mayoral terms are disallowed, a profoundly ambitious reform platform like the big SITP requires that subsequent administrations maintain a continuous goal and perspective on the mobility situation. The TransMilenio project alone was planned in 8 stages over three decades while the big SITP involves the staged release of new commuter trains, cable cars, subway lines, pedestrian zones, bicycle lanes and facilities and the 'little SITP'.

Some Bogotanos and Bogotá political leaders expect that conviction of improved quality of life to be demonstrated through the practice of *cultura ciudadana* , or 'citizen culture.' My research suggested that cultura ciudadana was an organic political concept to the city of Bogotá, an invention of Antanas Mockus, who before being elected Mayor of Bogotá for the first time in 1995 was a mathematician and President of Bogotá's *Universidad Nacional.* Mockus' innovation was his theory that, in order to solve certain urban problems, it was necessary to transform cultural traits, and that rehabituating people required affective strategies. The Mockus administration (1995-1997) is remembered for promoting Citizen Culture as part of its development plan for the city, "Formar Ciudad" (shape or mold the city). As Murrain (n.d., p. 3**)** notes, "much of the interest in the approach of civic culture was in the field of mobility." Famously, Mockus assigned the head of *Instituto Distrital de Cultura*, Paul Bromberg, to find a way of using shame and embarrassment to compel drivers to respect 'la cebra' ('the zebra'—the stripes in intersections indicating where pedestrians should cross and cars must stop). His

solution was to pay street mimes to occupy intersections and mock drivers who violated the zebras**.** This apparently did have positive effect and, at its height, the program employed 400 mimes (ibid).

At base, the cultura ciudadana concept aligns being a good citizen with behaving in a certain way in transit and with the use of social pressure to achieve that desired behavior. Today one encounters cultura ciudadana all around the discourse of the SITP, which suggests that a citizenly education is necessary in order to create the tolerance, solidarity, co-responsibility and conviviality that a reliable and comfortable mobility flow requires. At an event on October 10th, 2014, at the Secretary of Mobility, for example, I watched Dr. José Stalin Rojas, Director of the Observatory of Mobility at *La Universidad Nacional*, give a talk entitled "Barbarians, Bicycles and Drivers: Elements for Constructing Citizen Culture in Mobility." He listed in exquisite detail the troubling 'comportments' that threatened the efficiency and wellbeing of the TransMilenio system:

1) blocking the door
2) moving back and forth with bags
3) jumping turnstiles (i.e. sneaking on to the system)
4) charging onto the bus
5) taking up too much space
6) eating

In order to combat this behavior, he encouraged ordinary Bogotanos to make themselves into '*heroes*': heroes who not only followed cultura ciudadana but who would also take the emotional and bodily risk of confronting fellow passengers who did not. "The majority, the 97% of who follow the rules," Stalin Rojas said, "must police the 3% who are the '*insolidarios*"—those who lack in solidarity. With heroes turning insolidarios into

solidarios, another crucial piece of the hegemonic SITP—agreement with the system manifested in everyday conformist behavior—could be locked into place.

A final form of consensuality that the big SITP requires is that Bogotanos whose livelihoods were built around now-'obsolescent' modalities and infrastructures peacefully relinquish those livelihoods in the service of the greater good. Indeed, the TransMilenio system was the opening salvo in the battle against the traditional, informal bus system [the Transporte Colectivo Público (TPC) or buseta system] (Figure 11) that, in 2011 when the little SITP roll-out began, still accounted for 74% of bus trips in Bogotá despite TransMilenio's very public prominence. In order to describe the 'Penny Wars' dynamic within the TPC and the way the TransMilenio and SITP were organized to break it, I will quote at length (with redactions) from an October 14, 2015, animated video released by the engineering faculty of the University of Los Andes. The civil engineering department Los Andes is in the academic vanguard of transportation reform and has close ties with Peñalosa and TransMilenio S.A. Titled "The Sad History of Public Transport in

Figure 5: A driver points from behind the wheel of a *buseta*. Photo by Pilar Salcedo.

Bogotá,"[7] the video is effectively a pro-SITP propaganda piece from *Los Andes* that, by locating the origins of Bogotá's mobility woes in an important historical event (the "Bogotazo") and with subsequent development of the Guerra del Centavo (the 'penny wars') dynamic among TPC buses, aims to convince the public that the forceful elimination of the TPC is justified and necessary.

Everything began on April 9th, 1948. Jorge Elicier Gaitan[8] was assassinated and the city went mad. A good part of the trolly car system (Tranvía) was destroyed in the revolt. This left us with an important decision: we could invest in repairing the system, its trains and rails, or we could pass over to a system of buses like other cities in the world were doing. Bogotá already had buses in the zones of the cities where there were not trolley cars, but instead of maintaining a mixed solution, we decided to bet completely on this mode of transport (the buses). At first it was the state that administered and operated the system. But with the passing of years we started to privatize the system gradually that is known today as Transporte Colectivo Público (TPC)[9]. [With the privatization] two new characters emerged in the story: the affiliate companies (here EAs*) and the bus owners*

[7] The video had already been viewed 488,000 times on social media when I encountered it on July 19, 2016 and generated reams of social media debate—another testament to the public's profound interest in the 'mobility question' in Bogotá.

[8] Gaitan was a charismatic leader of the Liberal Party and presidential candidate who had been Mayor of Bogotá between 1936 and 1937. His assassination lead to urban riots in the capital known as the Bogotazo, which spread to the rest of the country and started the 10-year civil war, *La Violencia*, during which some 300,000 people were killed (Skinner Bog City Profile).

[9] *TransMilenio: La Joya de Bogotá* (2008) figures the history of transit in the Bogotá in three 'eras,' to which I have added a 4th:

1) 1884-1923: Era of the tranvia (tram or trolleycar).
2) 1920-1952: Competition tram vs. bus (long attrition, then a Big Bang when many of the trams were destroyed in the Bogotazo).
3) 1952-2000: Empire of buses. The first a big public bus company (Empresa Distrital de Transporte Urbano) is out-competed by a private bus company, dies in 1991 due to bureaucracy and clientalism.
4) 2000-current: (*My addition*) Era of the SITP (multi-modal transport reform beginning with TransMilenio).

*(*dueños*). The state assigned the EAs the responsibility of administering the bus routes of the city, but gave them the right to sell to a third party the rights to offer the services. The state would say to an EA "this route, this one, and this one are yours." Then, the EA would say to the dueño, "Hey, if you want, I will give you permission to drive on one of my routes, but you have to pay me for the right." This was pretty outrageous because the EAs were exploiting a public good without giving anything in return, or very little. This is how Bogotá's bus routes came to be commodities as the central element of an enterprise totally free of risk to the EAs. They did not buy buses nor contract drivers, they only sold the rights for routes to the dueños.*

This model brought a ton of perverse consequences…Given that the EA's receive more money for every bus that is in circulation, they want there be a lot of buses, as many as possible. For the state it is not good that there are so many buses because it clogs roads and makes traffic jams and pollution. Neither do the drivers want there to be so much competition because it makes it more difficult for them to collect sufficient passengers. The citizens, for their part, do not want the quality of service to be lowered. One sees in the voting that it is three to one (i.e. the citizens, state, and dueños have interests contradictory to the EAs), but the EAs have a trick up their sleeve: a lot of money. This translates to political influence. Over and over, against the necessities of the city, the state historically approved more routes and allowed more and more buses to enter in each one. It was a [vicious circle]: the more routes in existence, the more buses that circled, and the more buses that circled, the more money that the EAs received, and the more money they received, the more political power concentrated in their hands.

How is it possible that an inefficient system subject to market forces was sustainable from the 1970s until today? Lets take a moment to clarify the dueños of the buses are also victims of this badly designed model. The dueños invested in a business that at the beginning was profitable but with time turned into the Penny Wars, because the EAs found a way to sell too many 'cupos' *('spots' in the system). How did they not go broke? One has to recall that it is the state that defines the cost of a trip and that buses are the only transportation option for millions of people. The dueños did not go broke because they also have a way of influencing the decisions of the state:* los paros *(strikes or stoppages). Many times in Bogotá's history the dueños have striken to demand that the price of the service rise, and in this way the buseta (TPC) continues to be good business. For this reason, it's the passengers who end up paying for the inefficiency in the system. And this happened many times: the city would break down because of a* paro *and the state had no recourse but to raise the tariff. [Because the tariff increased much faster than the minimum salary], the people with the least resources have come to spend almost 20% of their incomes on transport. Deplorable…The point is here we see the complete vicious circle. Pollution, traffic jams, potholes, high prices, piracy, irresponsible conductors, 15 stops on the same block, ramshackle buses, noise, bad coverage in the extremes of the city, all of these are the consequence of a poorly designed model. In this cycle we passed a half-century…*

It is this 'cycle' behind the 'penny wars' that the SITP finally aims to break by eliminating the EAs and dueños, offering some of them (the EAs in particular) financial stakes in the SITP system. This requires, as we will see, that these actors 'buy in' to the

SITP in a financial, cultural and behavioral sense. This is yet another sense in which the big SITP is more than a transportation plan, and in fact requires profound social transformation such that the mobility public in Bogotá consolidates around a consensual problematization and infrastructural vision for the problem. As Maria Constanza Garcia, Director of the Secretary of Mobility, said of transportation reform at a public presentation Instituto Distrital de Recreación y Deporte, on November 14, 2014, "Mostly its about changing people. Their beliefs and habits and desires." The 2006 Mobility Master Plan (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2006, p. 8-2) put it somewhat differently: "its necessary that the population see the expansion and diversification of the transport services as improving their social condition and quality of life." Or, as several other mobility professionals in Bogotá put this idea simply in interviews, it is about "changing the chip" (Cambiarse el *chip)*.

"Changing chips" in Bogotá and producing new beliefs, habits and desires has; however, proven elusive. Certainly there is broad consensus among most, if not all, of the transportation and planning professionals I interviewed in Bogotá about what should be done about the mobility problem. "Everyone here has firmly in their minds the idea of an integrated system," Marcela Carrascal, sub-Director of Alternative Projects at TransMilenio told me (interview, November 11, 2014). Yet consensus among *politicos* (politicians) and *ciudadanos* (citizens) does not exist: the traffic problem is appreciated as an open conflict that belongs to the political sphere. There is a definite "contest on what appears, on what is given in a situation as a situation" (Rancière, 2003, p. 4). Indeed, one of Mayor Enrique Peñalosa's favorite quips was always that transportation decisions are

'political ones, not technical ones,' and always situated in terms of conflict around 'what we want to be as a society' (Walljaspar, 2010), and this conflict (as I detailed in the Introduction) has led to political discontinuity and the election of a series of mayors and representatives with different visions with respect to mobility. None of this is surprising in Bogotá, which is commonly regarded as one of the most contentious cities in Latin America. But it does throw into question the general tenor of post-political theory with its assumption of 'consensual conditions' as descriptive of the urban status quo and as the jumping-off point for what is considered properly democratic action. In other words, at least from the perspective of traffic in Bogotá, my suggestion is that post-political theory overestimates the degree of hegemonic order instituted in cities and, conversely, underestimates the practical difficulty in democratic societies of consolidating consensualities around environmental problems or even ruling *as though* there were consensus around them in an electoral system. As I will demonstrate in the next section, dissensus with respect the SITP on the part of 'difficult populations'—expressed in ways big and small—has only grown as the 'tecnicos' have redoubled their efforts to insert a hegemonic infrastructural vision.

Difficult populations

On November 4, 2014, I spent a couple of hours in the cubicle of Nohora Linares of the Secretary of Mobility. We were discussing the transition to the little SITP and about changing beliefs and habits and desires. Linares was charged with various aspects of what she referred to as 'capacitation' for the SITP. This meant retraining people who

were employed in the old TPC bus system for new careers and ways of life in the SITP. Linares told me that, before little SITP launched in 2011, the Secretary of Mobility spent four years trying to first locate, then to persuade, enlist and train thousands of *dueños* of the TPC for different roles within the new system—ideally, in roles as small investor capitalists within the new SITP bus companies. The training included three months of 'socialization' in business skills for the *dueños* as well as owners of the EAs (the richer bus affiliate companies) in the business skills of modern capitalist enterprise—"we were trying to change the chip," she said—followed by 7 months at the *Centro Comercial* in which the EAs, dueños, and other potential investors mingled, negotiated, and organized bids to become the new bus companies that would secure state contracts to operate the little SITP. At the time of the interview, Linares had moved on to another phase of capacitation: retraining the third parties who were being displaced by the little SITP transition. This included an estimated 13,000 individuals working in the roles of mechanics, vendors, restaurant owners, and route calibrators.[10]

Linares and the Secretary of Mobility had some successes 'changing chips' in these capacitation processes, but there were also difficulties. Despite the months of training in modern business skills, she complained that many of the dueños retained a 'cowboy'-type attitude that made them poor new-economy business managers. She pointed to the fact that two new SITP bus companies that skewed most heavily toward *dueño* ownership were struggling to maintain solvency, were near-bankruptcy, and were delaying the complete implementation of the little SITP. Of the 13,000 informal workers

[10] The human GPSs of the TPC, who wait in traffic near stoplights and time the passing of buses so that they can inform drivers, for a small fee, of their relative distance from competing buses.

being indirectly displaced by the arrival of the SITP, moreover, she noted that only 1,940 had been successfully connected with opportunities for technical roles in the new system. An even smaller number, 273, had participated in free *formación* opportunities in non-SITP labor like administration and accounting that the local government offered through the technical colleges (the SENA). Feeling the need to explain these unspectacular numbers, Linares looked up at me with a vaguely pleading look and said, "well you know these are *difficult* populations…"

Indeed, Bogotá was overflowing with 'difficult populations' when it came to the 'mobility question' and the SITP—populations who, sometimes casually and sometimes passionately, hewed to other logics, values and forms of mobile life in defiance of what was prescribed for them. These are difficult populations that have *vision dissonance* and *doble morales* (double morals), and they exhibit a range of dissensual practices from *doubtful enrollment* to *open resistance*.

Vision dissonance

"Vision dissonance" as I will discuss it here is a concept that comes from a study (2014) by Gwen Kash, a planning student at UNC, and Dario Hidalgo, a Bogotá public transportation expert who heads EMBARQ's network of international transport engineers. In the run-up to the launch of the 'little SITP' in 2011, the researchers conducted interviews and surveys with a sample of Bogotanos about their awareness of and expectations for the new system. They found major gaps in awareness, expectations, and goals between transit users and the little SITP planning team, including incompatibilities between transit users' basic understanding of the problematic situation

of mobility and the problems SITP has been designed to fix. Both the planners and citizens agreed in decrying 'chaos' as a prevailing problem in mobility, but after that there was little agreement about what, substantively, 'chaos' actually meant. This is 'vision dissonance' for Kash and Hidalgo:

> [D]ifferences in values, information, experience, and norms about what constitutes acceptable evidence between stakeholders. These latent differences in stakeholders' processes for considering and evaluating policy issues are often associated with overt differences in the conclusions they draw about what the problems are and how they should be solved (ibid, p. 3).

In this case vision dissonance meant that the little SITP was not, in the end, designed to improve any of the main complaints about current bus service—crowding, travel time, and crime—the Bogotá residents had. By reorganizing routes and taking buses off the road, in fact the little SITP was likely to make crowding and travel time worse. What the SITP fixes instead are problems thought to be in the interest of the city as a whole: too many vehicles, pollution, bad working conditions, and the *Guerra del Centavo*, which just 2.7% of Bogotanos noted as at the crux of the mobility problem despite its centrality to academic discourse about traffic.

What is interesting about debates around the mobility situation, however, is vision dissonance exceeds relatively minor debates about individual systems. There are deep disagreements about what the situation is, what it means, and how to move forward, as we see in the views forwarded by the neighborhood activist group Yo Quiero Mi Mirandela Residencial (I Want My Mirandela Residential). I met the two founding members of this group [names redacted upon request] at a coffee shop in the Centro Comercial Sante Fe in North Bogotá on March 16, 2015. Yo Quiero Mi Mirandela

Residencial organized as a group originally because SITP planners wanted to site a large *parqueadero* (parking area) for 600-700 buses in Mirandela and residents were worried about the effects. Heading north on TransMilenio to meet the group, I prepared myself mentally to converse with some elite NIMBYs. What I found were instead middle class folks who did have some NIMBY motivations ("Why do we have to take all the buses in *our* neighborhood?"), but who also brought a pretty damning, David Harvey-esque critique of urban politics that they delineated over 4 ½ hours of conversation.

"It isn't just about the SITP, you know?...You need to see *todo en completo* (everything in its completeness). It's not just the SITP, its part of a bigger problem happening in our society." The mobility problem and SITP 'solution' that they presented looked entirely different from the one the extended state presented. The major problem in Colombia for Yo Quiero Mi Mirandela Residencial was that it has become an extractive economy in which people can no longer afford their own lives. The SITP, for them, was *la gota* (the last drop) the follows a series of examples of the quality of life being destroyed by a pervasive logic in which urban problems are governed in order to make money, not to serve the public interest. What Yo Quiero Mi Mirandela Residencial understood was that the problem of mobility, the increasingly impossible problem of making oneself and one's family move within a meager budget, was a structural problem affecting the whole country and whole economy. The situation was not what mobility experts said it was, and the solution, the SITP, was not solving what it was said to be solving. This was 'vision dissonance' of the highest order, and it moved (as I will revisit below and in the next chapter) from being troubled by everyday situations to the

discovery and exploration of deep social antagonisms.

The doble moral

The *doble moral*—the double moral, or double standard—afflicts Bogotanos who buy-in to the SITP vision in word but not in deed. In my research the double moral tended to afflict the upper classes, since they had greater financial access to personal vehicles, the sworn enemy of the SITP, but were also more likely to be involved in its planning and management. A key political moment in the history of the double moral happened at the beginning of the first Peñalosa administration. Riding into power on the promise transportation reform, Peñalosa put the question of the car up to direct referendum: 'Would you like to eliminate cars entirely from the city?' the ballot asked. Bogotá voters said 'no.' 'Would you like to eliminate cars for one day a year?' Voters said 'yes.' This vote reaffirmed a threatened tradition of the *día sin carro* (day without cars) in the city, which since the Peñalosa administration spread around the world.[11]

Having denied themselves the most direct route to a less traffic clogged city—banning themselves from driving cars—the focal point of "changing the chip" for Bogotanos had to become making public transportation appealing enough for car owners and potential car owners to want to use it. So began the delicate and hypocritical dance that Hernando Arenas of IDU labeled for me in an interview (February 27, 2015) as the *doble moral*:

> Everyone says that they are for public transportation. Everyone in the city is in agreement that you have to reduce the offer of cars. Everyone says, 'we should disincentivize the use of vehicles'. But then everyone has their car. In this city 100,000 new vehicles enter the system every year. Until now very few elites have

[11]Minneapolis' Open Streets, wherein cars are banned from the streets and they are opened fully to pedestrians and other non-motorized uses, is based on this original idea.

> switched from vehicles to public transportation. The popular classes of course use it. And they go much faster. They go poorly but they go rapidly.

A similar *doble moral* dynamic happens with the price of parking in Bogotá, Arenas told me. If the city were serious about disincentivizing driving, the city would regulate it such that it costs a lot. But the fact is that parking is regulated to keep the cost of parking disproportionately low compared to other major world cities. It would make sense to make parking expensive so that people don't drive and let the *parqueaderos* charge what they will, but if the mayor did that "todo el mundo le caería en encima"—everyone would fall all over him (the mayor).

It is not just that drivers wanted the SITP for other people, but even planners did not want it for themselves. My interviews included some awkward encounters with public transportation planners who did not use their own technologies. One such exchange was with the Colombian National Planning Department, who had graciously agreed to spend a few hours explaining their work overseeing public transportation planning in Colombian cities. I posed the question, "how do you all travel to work?," to the group of three interviewees, one of whom quickly exclaimed with a nervous laugh, "I don't want to talk about that!" He excused himself from the room for another meeting, leaving his colleague to respond, referencing the map laid out before us on the table:

> Eh, I really tried to be congruent with our discourse, but I had to seek housing on the other side (of the city). We tend to promote non-motorized transport, but our office is located here and I live here. The distance is 16 kilometers. Going by bicycle, well, its not a comfortable distance…I have also tried the trunk corridor (TransMilenio), but right now TransMilenio is an extremely successful system as you well know and, um, there is a very high passenger demand. When I leave my house I would take an *alimentador* (feeder bus) but [the problem is that] the feeder bus takes 30 minutes, and from there the rest of the trip takes 45 minutes…a trip that is extremely long…I also tried the SITP…but it doesn't

> function for me. From this zone (pointing again at her home in the outskirts of Bogotá) there are two routes running but each means an hour and 45 minutes, an hour and 30 minutes in the best case…So finally I decided to use my car…which takes me an hour, sometimes a little less. I resigned myself to driving but I continue to intend to find a form (of mobility) that is more sustainable for me and that would not embarrass me so much. Because working in these themes of transportation… (trails off).

The doble moral means you agree with a diagnosis and solution to the mobility problem in word but do not actually perform that consensuality in practice—that you call the TransMilenio's overcrowding a measure of its 'success' but then politely decline to participate in that success. The sacrifice of time and convenience for the common good that using the SITP demands sounds important and necessary in the abstract, but appears as too onerous for oneself in their personal life.

Doubtful enrollment

If the double moral is a phenomenon of the higher classes, I found reluctant enrollment more common among the lower *estratos*. It describes the opposite phenomenon: people are compelled to agree with the SITP in body but do not agree with it in mind. The most obvious example of doubtful enrollment was Bogotá's relationship with the TransMilenio: most Bogotanos hate it, but they also need it to get back and forth across the city; for many there are no other viable options. A less obvious example of doubtful enrollment was also on display at a pair of bicycle-related events I attended at the IDRD (Instituto Distrital de Recreación y Deporte) in September and again in November of 2014. The September event included an expert panel talking about the importance of bicycles—one of the central elements of the SITP—and celebrating the launch of a new program, Al Colegio en Bici (To School by Bike), by the Secretary of

Mobility.

The majority of the audience were children aged 9-12, the inaugural participants in a program, who had been bused in for the day to represent the 16 schools in lower and lower-middle class neighborhoods—from Bosa, Suba, Engativá, Kennedy (see Figure 12)—that were participating in the inaugural program. So far they had successfully capacitated and equipped 1,500 students in peripheral neighborhoods to bicycle to school together in groups lead by adult chaperones. This included providing students with a 'canasta' that included a bicycle, helmet, reflective gear, and lock. The goal was eventually to equip thousands more students as a way addressing one of the more difficult if less publicized mobility problems in the city: how to get hundreds of thousands of students to school every day on clogged roads.

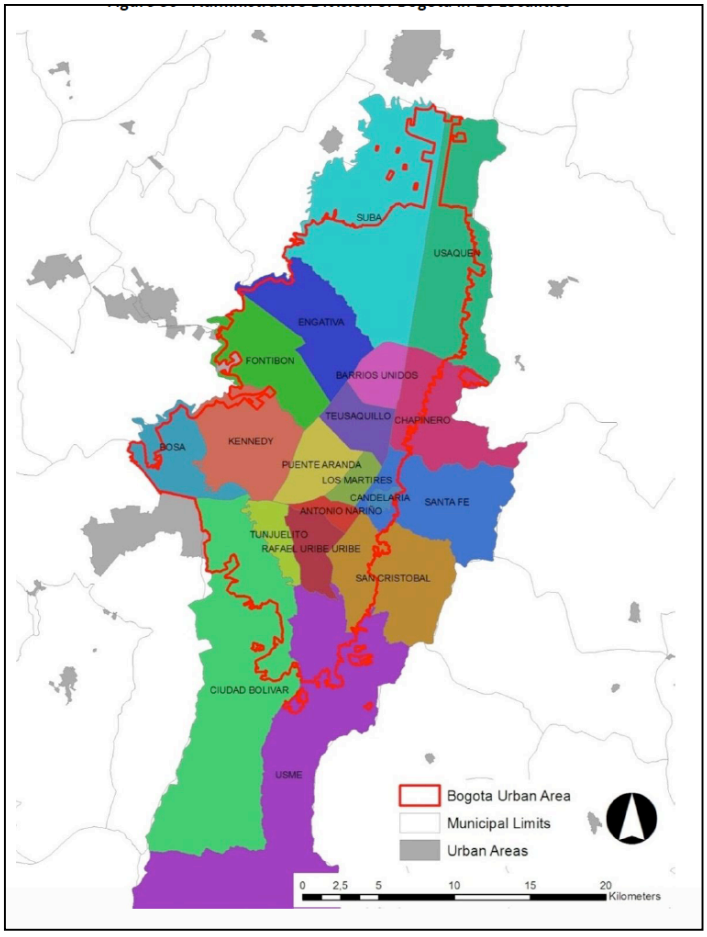

Figure 6: Administrative Division of Bogotá into 20 *localidades*. Source: World Bank (2012).

The students seemed genuinely excited enough about Al Colegio en Bici; the

program had perhaps tapped some organic desire and was steering them voluntarily toward new habits. But it became apparent that the parents were not as sold. I leaned over to talk to one of the group chaperones next to whom I was sitting, and who I learned was also a parent of students who participated in Al Colegio en Bici. Even though she was employed by the program to chaperone the children to school on bicycles, she spoke frankly about how nervous it made her and many of the parents. "They are happy to save the money for the bus, since sometimes if they have [money] for bus they don't have for lunch, and if they have for lunch they do not have for the bus." But she complained that the people high in the administration of the program don't really understand. "They are just happy if the kids leave and arrive to school on bikes. But you outfit them with all this fancy gear and they become targets in these poor neighborhoods. We worry that the kids will be robbed and we don't like sending them out alone in the dark in the morning." So parents reluctantly send their kids on bike anyway.

The woman expressed resentment at the city government casting bicycling students as environmental and social 'heroes' when what its real motives were simply to clear road space for other, more valued uses and users. It was a bitter sentiment I heard again at the second bicycle event at IDRD, a more public-oriented one with a smaller sub-section of students in the general audience. One of the representatives of *Al Colegio en Bici* was speaking about how the bicycle was a 'democratic vehicle' that combated socio-spatial segregation; how it was a great social leveler; how "todos nos bajamos al mismo estrato" when we ride—'we all lower ourselves to the same social strata'—and how riding bicycles was a good way in inculcate "self-sufficiency, *cultura ciudadana*,

and a democratic spirit." The crowd, to put it bluntly, called bullshit. A man rose and offered a comment that garnered by far the biggest cheers of the afternoon: "The bicyclist is the most vulnerable. The city makes it out like it is the initiative of a good individual, like it's about personal formation, about citizenship. But the city is just shifting the risk onto individual bodies without actually doing enough to protect them like building protective infrastructure cyclists need." The man gestured towards the kids as he spoke, the ones being enrolled in cycling and having risk shifted upon them for the 'common good'. "Is this what citizenship means in this context?" he asked. Students, their parents, and other adults might enroll in the SITP and ride bicycles because it makes practical and economic sense for them and their families. But this did not imply they would enroll in a cynical narrative that made them citizen-heroes for not having the privilege of participating in the *doble moral* and opting out of public-minded behavior.

Open resistance

"The chaos has returned to TransMilenio." So announced the Colombian newsweekly *Semana* (2015, Mar. 3) in a report on a wave of "bloqueos" (blockages or obstructions) that frustrated passengers had been spontaneously enacting on the city's beleaguered bus rapid transit system. Truthfully, the 'chaos' had been back for some time. Since I had arrived in Bogotá in late July 2014, I had come to expect on perhaps a bi-weekly basis to see scenes on the news, in the newspapers, or sometimes in person, of Bogotanos spilling out into TransMilenio's bus-only-lanes (see Figure 13) and obstructing circulation. Often these bloqueos expressed anger and defiance at what was viewed as a high-cost, low quality system that many commuters—especially those

moving from the periphery to the center and back—had little option but to use. As *Semana* (ibid) reported, "crowding, attacks, roaming venders and lack of authority are some of the causes of user rage." The bloqueos would often materialize at major peripheral stations at peak hours under conditions of crushing user demand, and were generally disbursed in turbulent scenes of tear gas and police in black riot gear, which would then become fodder for sensationalist news coverage on outlets like *Noticias Caracol*.

Figure 7: TransMilenio's bus-only lanes. Photo by Pilar Salcedo

While a single *bloqueo* might only paralyze one trunk of the network, it can reverberate through the mobility system at large and cause extreme delay and difficulty. These protests launched against TransMilenio, *about* TransMilenio, are just one class of 'normal obstruction' that the system weathers. Diego Leal Castro (2013) found in his research on political mobilizations in Bogotá that blocking TransMilenio had become an entrenched practice for performing dissent about all manner of issues in politically rambunctious Bogotá, including state policy, human rights, and social and infrastructural issues. The *Base de Datos de Luchas Sociales* (database of social struggles) from which Leal Castro's research drew, which is maintained by the local NGO Cinep, indicated that there had been a minimum of 112 separate incidences of bloqueo-type protest against

TransMilenio between December 2000 (when the system opened) and 2010. Furthermore, Leal Castro reported, just the presence of TransMilenio in some neighborhoods had actually *increased* the frequency of public protest in general. Over all, between 1991-2010, Cinep registered a total of 1,985 'obstructions' to public space and public institutions in Bogotá. "From of all of this," Leal Castro (2013) suggested "we can conclude that this new form of struggle related to the infrastructure of TransMilenio is important for the discovery of dissent in the contemporary Colombian capital" (p. 35). Together frustrations with circulation in Bogotá and the presence of TransMilenio as a suggestive site for protest *in general* had resulted in elevated counts of very public acts of resistance and obstructionism to government policy and the status quo.

A more organized effort at resistance, albeit using some of the same tactics, is exemplified in the TPC dueños' struggle for livelihood and way of life against the 'little SITP' and the monopolization of the transit market in Bogotá. To mitigate what officials at TransMilenio and the Secretary of Mobility regard as oversupply of obsolete buses, SITP's implementation included scrapping 8,000 aging vehicles and purchasing 2,867 new vehicles in the first year of operation alone, resulting in a net reduction of 30 % for the total fleet (Figure 14). Through this process, which was still underway when I left Bogotá, eventually all old buses would be removed from the streets and replaced by a steadily more ecological fleet within a formal business and management structure. The operational and financial structure of the SITP is intended to make capitalist competition happen *for* the transit market rather than *in* the market (the dynamic of the *Guerra del Centavo*). The issue, as several mobility experts pointed out to me, is that integrating a

system means taking money out of it (i.e. a single fare for multiple trips means there are fewer fares going in), and this means taking people and financial interests out.

The dueños' struggle against the SITP was spearheaded by Apetrans, or the Asociación of Pequeños Transportadores (Association of Small Transporters). Apetrans organized over twenty years ago to try to protect the employment and way of life of this particular subset of workers within the mobility system, the dueños, whose 'business model' might be to own one or two buses and employ their sons to drive. "Apetrans is the rock in the shoe of the bigs," Apetrans president Alfonso Perez told me in an interview (March 11, 2015), with the "bigs" referring to whatever entities were trying to consolidate financial dominance in bus transport. Historically this was the EAs (the affiliate companies referenced in the transcript of the Los Andes video). Today, the "bigs" refers to the state, multinational investment companies and the EAs, all of which have come together with interests in the new SITP system. The SITP's strategy to break the financial and political power of the EA's was as to invite them into the SITP as financial partners in the new bus companies that would compose it (recall that Nohora Linares of the Secretary of Mobility was

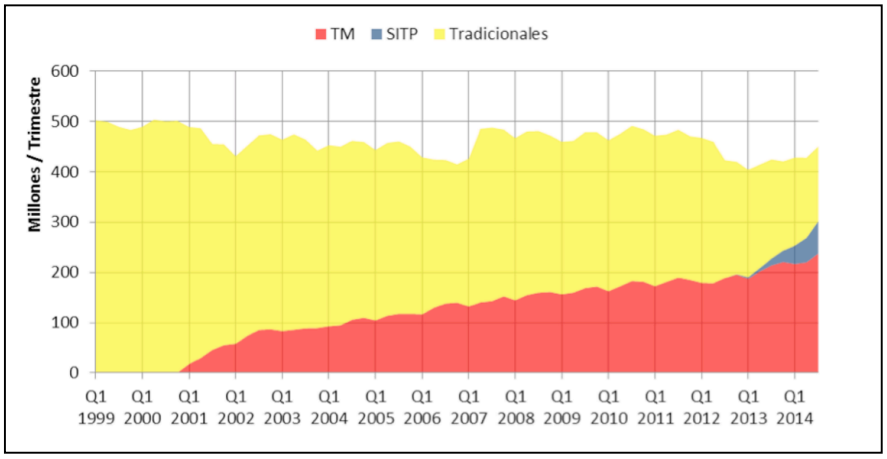

Figure 8: Declining share of transit trips for the TPC buses ('Tradicionales,' in yellow). Source: Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá (2011).

working on the capacitation part of this process). While there were attempts to get the dueños inside as stakeholders as well, Perez complained that the "big fish eventually ate the little ones." Today the seven companies who operate TransMilenio, and the 13 companies who were awarded zonal concessions to operate the SITP, are constituted in large measure by multinational investors, the EAs and only a spattering of the thousands of dueños of the TPC.

The dueños had long been fighting against consolidation, and they have used primarily the power of the strike. Indeed, Apetrans as an organization was born in a strike, in 1995 during the opening stages of transport reform in Bogotá even before the TransMilenio:

> The made a resolution the said that all buses older than 1977 could not circulate in the city anymore (because of pollution). And the newest vehicle that we poor had was the 1978. How are they going to just pull them (off the road)? So we went and blocked Calle 32 where it meets Avenida Caracas. Both lanes, because we had the buses to do it. And we didn't let any car pass. Then the Secretary of Mobility came and told us they would incarcerate us. 'Well, do it then,' we said. But they didn't. The blockade lasted like 4 hours more. After 4 hours the Secretary arrived again and said, 'fine, lets make a deal.' We will do something so that you can circulate. And so it became about this.

Because Bogotá is so dependent on bus transportation, threatening to stop circulation (and sometimes actually stopping circulation) has historically been a very successful tactic for making demands. Apetrans has used this method dozens of times, Perez told me, in the succeeding years to defend their place in the transportation order. Although the SITP consolidation marches on, the dueños continue to resist until the bitter end in an effort to get better financial terms from the state while leaving system and in order to get the state to honor the deals that is has already made. The antagonism between the petty

capitalist bus owners and the EAs, the state, and 'los grandes' is real, already discovered and accessed, and was being battled out loudly in Bogotá in 2015.

Conclusion: Urban democracy, dissensus and experimentation

The above discussion can be summarized by the simple claim that no hegemonic order has been successfully inserted into the traffic problem in Bogotá. It might be objected that the dissensual practices and attitudes described above are not *the same* kinds of dissensualities that post-political theorists are concerned with. Perhaps all of this is activity that falls within the hegemonic 'police order':

> The consensual mode of governance that has reduced political conflict and disagreement to either an ultra-politics of radical and violent disavowal, exclusion and containment or to a para-political inclusion of different opinions on anything imaginable (as long as it does not question fundamentally the existing state of the neo-liberal political economic configuration. (Swyngedouw 2011b, p. 1-2).

Or, as Derickson (2017, p. 7-8) puts it in a somewhat different formulation, perhaps the term 'post-political' signifies the way cities are governed "as though there is consensus around particular normative goals" and not "that there is no contestation around these issues or…that they are in any way not inherently political" (p. 7-8); from this latter perspective, the 'post-political' element, if there is one, might be the Bogotá government's rigid and continuous assumption despite electoral volatility that traffic flow must be improved (and perhaps to the exclusion of other policy interests and goals).

Part of my argument is that traffic is viscerally 'real' enough that there is genuine consensus among Bogotanos that something needs to be done—even if that is the *only* point of agreement and there exists substantial 'vision dissonance' and conflict about

what the problem contains, what its effects are, and what should be done. Rather than try to parse these post-political definitions further and determine whether they 'apply' in their specificity, what I want to question is the broad attitude of post-political theory: the assumption that effective hegemony or consensuality of some sort is the baseline condition in urban politics and what this means for how we imagine meaningful democratic practice. Even in the Global North, do we not live in fantastically antagonistic, contentious, divided and conflictive worlds? Do we live amid ordinaries fully organized by power, or amid ordinaries disorganized by it, too, to paraphrase Lauren Berlant (2011)? And if the answer is 'both' or 'it depends on the situation,' do we need multiple democratic theories and prescriptions for 'properly' democratic action or only the post-politics one that valorizes dissensus and disruption over all else?

The consequences of accepting an analytic that reads urban politics from a baseline state of cognate ideas like hierarchical order, police order, consensuality, and hegemony is that the political prescription consists largely of resistance and destabilization. For Rancière, again, any sedimented social order is effectively a post-political or post-democratic order; 'real' politics and democracy for him name the same phenomenon, the rare moment when the social orders' excluded rise up to demonstrate their natural equality by breaking the perceptual shackles of the 'police order'. As geographers have gravitated toward post-political/'radical' democratic theories to understand contemporary urban politics, they have adopted both the imagination of consensual condition and a keen focus on democratic disturbance—albeit one more generally conceived than Rancière's very particular vision. In a too-consensual world

antagonism becomes the 'heart of democracy,' as the geographer Staeheli (2010) put it. "[T]o the extent they were part of a process of democratization, [democratic movements] relied on disruption, rather than conformity… and resistance to established patterns of order." (p. 70). Engulfed by consensuality, the imperative is to battle back and overthrow, or else search for heterotopias (Foucault, 1986) or 'egalibertarian spaces' (Swyngedouw, 2011a) in distant archipelagos outside the given conditions of everyday life.

Yet if we discover that our urban worlds are more dissensual than our current theories purport—or perhaps that the consensual and dissensual, the hegemonic and the disordered, co-exist in different places and moments in the city—the idea of disruption as the 'heart of democracy' makes less sense as a general prescription of how to move forward toward a place where 'the people' can meaningfully self-govern. The major drawback of post-political theories becomes quickly apparent: they say nothing about the question of how to govern, much less of how to govern democratically, in situations where dissensuality and antagonism are already there. Dewey's philosophy, by contrast, insisted that democracy was ultimately a question of collective self-organization (Barnett, 2014). In a world where difficult social problems continually materialize and where democratic ambitions and technologies are already unleashed, antagonisms (i.e. 'the political') can never be eliminated or suppressed for the duration, and governments will continually be forced to give standing to alternative governing objectives. For pragmatists, antagonism is ineluctable in democratic life but far from the 'heart' or the point. Such a perspective is important in a case like the mobility situation in Bogotá where dissensus is ample and disorder is not necessarily desirable: no one wins, rich or

poor, in a city mired in traffic.

Chantal Mouffe is sometimes read in geography as an interchangeable 'anti-consensual' figure with Rancière. Yet she can be read in a pragmatic light, too. "Every consensus," Mouffe tells us, "appears as a stabilization of something essentially unstable and chaotic" (2000, p. 136) and involves operations and plays of power. Power relations are characterized by hegemonies: a particular group or alliance of groups succeeds in establishing their political agenda as the dominant agenda in society as a whole, and this agenda always has a constitutive outside such that any 'reformist' effort at inclusion can never be actually inclusive. Yet just because every consensuality is hegemonic and non-inclusive does not mean that order is never necessary or desirable. As Mouffe put it in an interview:

> Well of course, hegemony is positive in the sense that, if we accept that there is no order, if we did not have any kind of hegemony, we would be living in complete schizophrenia. There would not be any form of meaning, any form of order. In other words, the question is not to get rid of power. Power is constitutive for the social; there is no social without power relations. Now, any form of order is a hegemonic order, *but of course there are some forms of order that are more democratic than others.* Power relations are constructed in different ways. A democratic society in which there is accountability is a form of order and it is a better form of order than an authoritarian regime (Carpentier & Cammaerts, 2006, p. 970, *my emphasis*)

We can grant that every seeming agreement is really hegemony of some interests over others—in traffic or in any other societal 'space'—and that it will never be perfect or inclusive. Yet it is still true that agreements big and small must be made, hegemonies constituted, and 'chips changed' if we are to survive as marginally self-governing peoples in a troubled world, and that if 'the people' do not do it for themselves some other entity will do it for them. For a pragmatist sensibility these truths set up a problem: what does it

mean to create democratic orders—or at least the most democratic orders possible—given what critical theory has shown us about what hegemony always is?

With respect to the problem at hand, the pragmatic question is not how to overthrow hegemony in traffic (since anyway one does not exist), but rather what would the most just, egalitarian and inclusive way of organizing mobility be given the inequalities and antagonisms inherent in the situation? What does 'democracy' *mean* in traffic, and what is 'authoritarian'? From a pragmatic perspective the only way to adjudicate difficult social problems—be they the problem of traffic, the problem of democracy, or the problem of their relation—is by experimental action upon them in the concrete contexts in which they arise. Dewey (1935) wrote in *Liberalism and Social Action*, with evident irritation:

> It is assumed that the 'experimentalist'[12] is one who has chosen to ignore the uncomfortable fact of conflicting interests. Of course, there *are* conflicting interests; otherwise there would be no social problems. The problem under discussion is precisely *how* conflicting claims are to be settled (81).

For Dewey, there is no way to transcend the domain of politics—of conflict and antagonism—but there are better and worse ways to see our way through the problems it entails. He saw the difference between democracy and authoritarianism in terms of contrast between the use of intelligent methods to sway belief, habit and desire and the use of violence to do the same.

The latter is by far the most prepond4erant method used historically to deliver order, and one that undergirded the roll-out of the SITP, but it is ultimately less effective for governing in the long-term than would be genuine 'buy-in' to some form of life that

[12] See conclusion, where I define the scholarly affect of the experimentalist (pragmatist) vis-à-vis the 'critic' and the 'enthusiast'.

movement forward in actually-existing democratic societies requires (Dewey 1939/1988). As the recent history of trying to manage traffic in Bogotá amply demonstrates, without an infrastructural resolution genuinely appreciated by the public as a 'good' worth building and sustaining, resistance, double morals, doubtful enrollments, and vision dissonance will abound and undermine movement forward. The goal of democratic experimentation on problems is not an end-state of 'conformity' or 'consensus' exactly, but instead the invention of new ways of being together. The idea of an actually agreeable mobility strategy, or set of strategies and forms of life, may indeed be impossible and naively utopian. But whatever might be right and good with respect to traffic, as we will see in the next chapters that explore pragmatic forms of democratic inquiry, Bogotanos are busy developing positive, inventive and collaborative efforts at figuring it out.

CHAPTER THREE **Footholds and Stages: Making Democratic Subjects**

I ended the last chapter by gesturing to the limitations of imagining democratic action in terms of resistance to established orders, and this chapter moves forward with this theme by offering an alternative, pragmatist theory of democratic action and subjectivation. Critical urban geographers working in both the Marxian and radical democratic traditions are often interested in subjects of political resistance who push back and overthrow and take to the streets. Working on traffic is inevitably conflictual and contestatory, but 'restive' does not describe the dominant affect through which I observed Bogotanos operating on the mobility situation and, through it, on the collective life of the city. This chapter argues that Ranciere's vision of democratic subjectivation as occurring in rare moments of revelatory speech offers only a limited view on how urban political actors become concerned to act, how the city gives them footholds for action, and how their subjectivity shifts with action and their power grows. Through the stories of several Bogotanos' 'journeys of political subjectivation in traffic,' I show how problematic situations become wellsprings for diverse forms of what Dewey, perhaps uniquely among democratic philosophers, would consider political engagement: individuals affected by a public problem capitalizing on its potentialities to reconstruct it the name of a public interest or social good.

In the first section, I describe Rancière's theory of democratic subjectivation and hold up a potentially-democratic happening in Bogotá against his 'democratic criteria' as read through interpreters in urban geography, especially Swyngedouw (2009, 2010, 2011b) and Davidson and Iveson (2015a, 2015b). Geographers have noted that Rancière

might narrow 'the political/the democratic' too far to make his theory generally serviceable (Beveridge & Koch, 2016; Holifield & Schuelke, 2015; Rodgers, Barnett, & Cochrane, 2014). This section demonstrates with reference to empirical examples how that 'narrowing' excludes potentially important moments in subjects' trajectories of political subjectivation. The second section describes Dewey's democratic vision and the ways that it differs from political participation in the liberal-democratic/institutional model, where the state provides channels for structured participation in consensual decision-making; from the 'radical'/post-political idea of destabilizing consensual orders; and from critical theories that tend to deduce political interests from deeper interests established outside of the urban process itself (Barnett & Low, 2004). It suggests that Dewey's political philosophy, in its pragmatic concern with the 'mechanics' of democratic subject formation, offers a distinct perspective centered on inquisitive practice and transactional experience with material problems in the socio-environment.

Since Dewey's theory of democracy is generally liberal (although 'radically' so by his own estimation), the chapter concludes by tackling some potential problems related to Dewey's liberalism as they appeared in the chapter's arguments. In particular, I confront Dewey's reluctance (at least in writing) to distinguish between more and less powerful members of 'the' public and to prioritize their participation accordingly. Ultimately I affirm the value of Rancière's insistence on the excluded or 'part with no part' as the privileged subject of democratic politics, and suggest that a workable theory of democratic subjectivation for urban geographers might combine Rancière's insight with Dewey's pragmatic view of political development as creative and socially-minded

action on problematic situations, as with the latter's insistence on education as foundational to the capacitation and enrichment of the democratic subject.

Democratic subjectivation as event

While "post-politics" has come under significant scrutiny in geography (McCarthy, 2013; Beveridge & Koch, 2016), critical conversations about Rancière tend to elide a key tenet of his thought that this chapter holds up to critical reflection: his philosophy of democratic subjectification. For Rancière, the political/democratic moment (for him they are synonyms) is knowable in its scarcity. It is "certainly not in evidence everywhere on an everyday basis," as Davidson and Iveson put it (2015b, p. 549). Democratic subjectivation requires a complex constellation of conditions to come together: the right actor and the right action, as well as a 'stage' that has not been pre-defined 'for politics' and thereby been functionally depoliticized. For Rancière, democratic subjectivation (literally) *takes place* when 'the part of those with no part,' those who occupy the 'constitutive outside' of the sensible order ('police order') and whose identities, demands and material circumstances are not legible within it, break through into regimes of recognition. When this rare democratic/political moment occurs, the 'part with no part' render visible both themselves and the exclusionary nature of the police order that claims to count everyone but does not. For Rancière (2010), "the feature that binds all the diverse historical instances of politics is that it concerns a particular kind of speech situation" in which those who are "excluded from the political order or included in it in a subordinate way stand up and speak for themselves" by expressing a

natural equality as speaking beings that has been denied them in the hierarchical police order (p. 6). Democratic politics are constituted by these declarations and verifications of equality that produce a dissensus that disrupts the police order. The 'reassigning of roles' that occurs in these moments, when both the part with no part and the subjects in the police order are shocked into a new understanding of self and other, is what Rancière (2006, 2010) refers to as the 'logic of equality.'

An example of just such a democratic moment for Rancière is Rosa Parks' famous protest action on the public bus. As Davidson and Iveson (2015b) describe it,

> In Hatred of Democracy (2006) Rancière takes us to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955 and briefly retells the story of how Rosa Parks turned a commuter bus into a space for the staging of politics. In this account, Parks 'decided to remain in her seat on the bus, which was not hers, [and] in this way decided that she had, as a citizen of the United States, the rights she did not have as an inhabitant of a State that banned the use of such seats to individuals with one-sixteenth or more parts of 'non-Caucasian' blood' (2006: 61) (p. 553-554).

Here Parks' action on a commuter bus helped to establish a new relationship between the world in which she did not have certain civil rights and the world in which she did, and it meant that society had to change and roles had to be reassigned.

Rancière tends to buttress his arguments about the making of democratic subjects by drawing on these kinds of notable moments in political historiography. But when we start looking for these moments in the movement of everyday urban politics as it exists in cities today, we run into some practical and conceptual difficulties. Rancière's democratic moments are certainly hard to isolate—and of course we were warned about this—but perhaps more troubling is the way that when we look longitudinally at diverse movements of actual struggle around traffic (or U.S. civil rights, for that matter), the idea

that this very particular kind of speech situation should be isolated and hold a special place as *the* transformational 'democratic happening' looks questionable.

In my 14 total months conducting research in Bogotá, I recorded a single event that might possibly be classified as one where political subjectivities were altered by Rancièrian standards. I described last chapter the TransMilenio protests and blockades that have proliferated in Bogotá in recent years, especially in the peripheral areas of the city where service is most oppressive and crowded. The moment happened at one of these protests at Portal del Sur, a major TransMilenio hub located in the impoverished extremes of Southern Bogotá. It was I chaotic scene that I viewed on TV over lunch on a broadcast on *Noticias Caracol* in March 2015. Dozens of Bogotanos were occupying the TransMilenio *carriles* and shouting, and scores of Colombian National Police in heavy military gear were trying to restore circulation by, among other things, hurling canisters of tear gas into the crowd. The *Noticias Caracol* reporter was interviewing participants and bystanders and the camera cut to a distraught woman. She leaned into the screen and exclaimed, angrily but with slow deliverance, "we asked for buses and they sent us [tear gas] bombs!"

In its basic architecture, "We asked for more buses and they sent us bombs!," is a speech situation that seems to involve the 'part who have no part' speaking for themselves and declaring their equality in a situation that denies it. The TransMilenio system is supposed to be inclusive and equally functional for all Bogotanos, and the woman's sentiment was something of an equality declaration: 'we, too, deserve enough buses to move us,' she seemed to imply 'but that equal treatment is being denied,to us

even violently, by the state. Although 'buses not bombs' did not universalize its message, it also did not crumble against the other shore of indiscernibility. Swyngedouw (2011b) argues that in the post-political city proclamations of dissent, when they are mustered at all, often disqualify themselves from 'the political' because they take the form of a blind rage: "outbursts without vision, project, dream, or desire, without proper symbolization" (p. 10). Here the symbolizaation and dream (however modest) seem clear enough.

If the actor and the action more or less qualify as meeting the conditions of a possibly democratic/political moment, the question then becomes if the 'stage' (location where the act was carried out) was appropriately political and, relatedly, how the action was received by onlookers within the police order. In order for it to be deemed 'political,' the demonstration of equality has to be received in the right way by the rest of the social order for it to transform perception. Because political subjectivation emerges only when there is meeting between the police logic and the egalitarian logic, both the claimants to equality *and* those accounted for in the police order must come away changed. More often than not—and basically always for Swyngedouw—'the order' absorbs any threat by accounting in advance for the action. This accounting for in advance, in my reading, is a major factor behind Swyngedouw's (2011a) feeling that "the polis, conceived in the idealized Greek sense as the site for public political encounter and democratic negotiation, the spacing of (often radical) dissent and disagreement, and the place where political subjectivation emerges and literally takes place, is moribund" (p.5)—that is, his feeling that cities are 'post-political'.

At first glace the stage of the event in question seems promising, too, since Rancière explicitly singles out demonstrations of equality that repurpose public rights-of-way in his writing:

> The police says that there is nothing to see on a road, that there is nothing to do but move along. It asserts that the space of circulating is nothing other than the space of circulation. Politics, in contrast, consists in transforming this space of 'moving-along' into a space for the appearance of a subject: i.e. the people, the workers, the citizens. It consists in refiguring the space, of what there is to do there, what is to be seen or named therein (Rancière, 2001, p. 22).

On the other hand, with TransMilenio protests there would seem to be a strong danger that the 'stage' will have been accounted for in advance. The problem is that, "[j]ust as the allocation of certain spaces as beyond politics serves to police, the identification of certain spaces as the proper site of politics can also possess an exclusionary, depoliticizing logic" (Davidson & Iveson, 2015, p. 554). The sheer quantity of the obstructions that TransMilenio has endured, which I detailed last chapter, signal the normalization of this protest form and therefore its probable disqualification as a site of proper politics. In fact, my research confirmed the normalization of TransMilenio demonstrations among the work of the *actual* police in Bogotá. One November afternoon I spent several hours with Colonel Jairo Torres, the head police officer for TransMilenio, who explained (in some detail) the police's strategies for de-escalating *bloqueos* and maintaining circulation—as task that he took as the primary responsibility of his post.

Although I had no way of measuring the perceptual impact of the 'buses not bombs' moment, other experiences in Bogotá led me doubt the revelatory impact of any one single protest event. Indeed, on my trip home from the meeting with Torres at the TransMilenio offices, riding on a TransMilenio bus, I happened upon another *bloqueo*—

another would-be democratic moment—that suspended my journey. From behind the tall campus walls of *La Universidad Nacional,* Bogotá's left-radical and rambunctious public university, students were firing *papas bombas* (potato bombs) at the militarized police positioned 50 meters outside the walls, who were returning their customary tear gas. The TransMilenio trunk passed right through the line of fire between the campus walls and the riot police, and a long line of big red busses sat paralyzed a hundred meters back. Our bus huddled in behind to the sound of groans and hushed curses from the passengers. I leaned over to my seatmate: "what are they protesting?" "Ugh, porque sí y porque no," he responded ('because yes and because no'). He rolled his eyes, pulled his phone from his pocket, and called someone to say he would be late from work. Even if this protest counted among those 'short-lived moments when those who are excluded from the political order…stand up and speak for themselves,' it was not received this way on my bus. How can there be a redistribution of the sensible when the public only wishes to make it home to dinner?

Given all these details, it would be specious to argue that the 'buses not bombs' moment or TransMilenio *bloqueos* in general meet the criteria for the appearance of the properly political/democratic in the same way that Rosa Parks' protest did. The conclusion to be reached following Rancière s logic, and in Swyngedouw's spirit, would then be that political subjectivation is simply not occurring in and around the mobility problem in Bogotá. Yet as we will see in the next section, this conclusion contradicts my research findings, which suggest a very different story where the traffic problem becomes a rich site for the emergence of new political subjectivities and ambitions in Bogotá.

More than this, it must be pointed out how difficult it is to know empirically how *any* moment in which equality (or anything else) is publically declared was received, whether and how it changed perception, and what part it played in the political trajectories of the subjects, the public or the city. In centering a noted story like Parks' rather than the dogged work of transforming the legal, cultural and political habits of a society over decades, one could even accuse Rancière of reproducing an uncritical, American public school reading of the Civil Rights movement in which one brave act changes everything.

In other words, expanding on the critique that Rancière "celebrates rupture while paying insufficient attention to the social relations that create the conditions in which rupture becomes possible" (Derickson, 2016, p. 45), what I want to open to questioning is the underlying idea that democratic subjectivation occurs *at all* in revelatory events of performance and recognition. Conversely, we might imagine political subjectivation as a process—prolonged, winding, and uncertain—of discovering the kinds of viewpoints, tactics, and attachments that, over time, made the anti-Jim Crow counterpublic ever stronger and Bogotanos' passions for traffic and the form and meaning of their shared existence grow. What if we become transformed as political subjects not by expressing and witnessing in singular instances, but by thinking, doing and experiencing in everyday life in relatively mundane events that grow and accrue in—or rather *as* a—life?

Democratic subjectivation as process

In this section I present a countervailing view of the becoming of a democratic subject in which problematic situations compel expanding journeys of public

engagement. It is a practical and evolutive idea of democratic subjectivation in which, through a diversity of experimental interventions that Dewey calls 'inquiry,' subjects develop ways of tinkering with problems in the socio-environment—from the modest and dramatic— that alter the situation and lifecourse of the subject. A key difference is that democratic practice, for Dewey, is not about disruption or antagonism ('the political') but is instead fundamentally about *building*—theories, strategies, techniques and techonlogies, alliances, organizations, movements—in the space that problems open up, with the energy that they generate, on the part of a public, and by learning from past practice. The practices of problematizing, tinkering and attaching that I outline as constitutive of inquiry need not be understood as happening in a chronological series, but can instead be seen as an amplifying movement that parallels the deepening of problems discussed in Chapter 1.

"Inquiry," for Dewey, refers to the practices humans undertake in an effort to understand, influence, and reconstruct the problematic situations—public and private—that they confront as obstacles to their flourishing in their everyday lives. When inquiry is oriented toward changing circumstances in the interest of a broader public or social good, it names a pragmatic form of political participation. The kind of inquiry that generates publics is generally intersubjective and intercommunicative; 'social inquiry' (Kadlec, 2007) and constitution of a public sphere will be the subject of the next chapter. Inquiry cannot proceed effectively unless we experiment, or tinker with, or change reality in certain ways, so it signifies not just mental labor but a range of embodied interventions into material circumstances that include mental aspects. It is the process by which we

"improve our individual and shared capacity to tap into the critical potential of lived experience in a world that is unalterably characterized by flux and change" (Kadlec, 2007, p. 12). Dewey's idea was that one can deliberately change a situation that is problematic into one that is more satisfying, but also that the situation and what it means to reconstruct it 'satisfactorily' will change in time, as will the subject, in a 'transactional' movement.[13]

While radical democratic theory focuses on exceptional acts, moments and spaces, pragmatic democratic action is scrappy and entrepreneurial. It is compelled through bodily affect—that 'being bothered' into attention that I discussed in Chapter 1—but it also relies on volition and the development of habits and capacities of intervention. Pragmatic action takes from what is there in the immediate social and material environment and recombines it into new forms that are not purified from social contexts from which they emerge. Thus the emergent democratic subjects we will meet are not, on the whole, the ideal subjects of radical/anti-capitalist political theory: they combine their social ambitions with pecuniary livelihood strategies, aspire to governmental positions in order to forward their emergent political visions, and fail to abstract and universalize their political demands, leaving them stubbornly entangled with the same material situation that compelled inquiry: traffic in Bogotá. The subjects are entrepreneurs in the original sense of the French word: "one who undertakes" (Merriam-Webster 2016).

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[13] In this respect, Dewey's position resonates with Gramsci's (1992) in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*: "Each one of us changes himself, modifies himself to the extent that he changes and modifies the complex relations of which he is the hub. In this sense the real philosopher is and cannot be other than the politician, the active man who modifies the environment, understanding by environment the ensemble of relations which each of us enters and takes part in. If one's own individuality is the ensemble of those relations, to create one's personality means to acquire consciousness of them and modify ones own personality means to modify the ensemble of these relations" (p. 352).

Finally, 'tapping into the critical potential of lived experience' implies taking advantage of whatever affordances are present in the situation. While sometimes these 'footholds' may be public spaces to be occupied and marshaled in powerful speech situations, I figure them here in terms of the qualities described in the first chapter—especially immediacy, seriousness, and endurance—that make the mobility situation available to be tinkered with and recreated. I borrow the image of footholds from the English philosopher and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead, although I came to it in Isabelle Stengers' (2011) recent book-length treatment of Whitehead's thought. Seeking to explain the phenomenon of awareness as, to put it crudely, a 'human-environment' achievement, Whitehead evokes the image of the mountain climber. The mountaineer's climb depends, and counts, on a ledge found by her hand or foot. Indeed, the mountain-climber's very mode of existence requires that the ledge offer her a foothold…"The possibility of a foothold is the requirement immanent to the problem to which 'mountain-climber' constitutes a risky set of solutions," as Stengers (2011, p. 235) puts it. Even more than the basic requirement that something be 'the matter,' Dewey insisted, we might think of the matter of democratic action as holding something out that boosts the would-be democratic subject along as she endeavors to enact conditions of collective life different from those immediately given.

Democratic journeys: problematizing

I met Mikki Love, Colombia's self-proclaimed 'only car designer,' by chance while on holiday. I was walking with friends on a dirt road outside of Villa de Lleva, a colonial town outside of Bogotá, and he pulled his Volkswagen over and offered us ride

back to our hostel. Although he was a designer of racecars, I learned that Love had his foot in a second door: inventing 'last-mile solutions' for Bogotá's public transportation system. In Bogotá, Mikki explained, figuring out how to get to and from the nearest bus or TransMilenio stop is an impediment to using public transportation. It pushes people toward driving and further clogging the system. So Mikki was working to design an affordable, foldable motorcycle that could be carried on to crowded public transit.

Mikki was not always interested in the mobility problem, he told me in Bogotá some weeks later when we sat down for an interview (May 11, 2015). "I was the kid who got in trouble in class for drawing cars in my notebook instead of paying attention," he said in the English he learned in Miami as a teenager. Mikki described his early interest in vehicles in terms of how machines augment what the body can do. "A bicycle makes you like 3-4 times more forceful. Imagine what a car does." As Mikki got older, however, his thinking shifted. "Living in Bogotá, living with the traffic, its hard not to become invested in the broader situation. I stopped being interested only in the fastest thing and I started to think more about the mobility problem that we experience together in the city." As an engineer, Mikki's manner of problematizing traffic leaned toward the technical: he was concerned primarily that "everyone use the right kind of mobility technology for the given trip." Yet his problematization was also shot through with social analysis. The city needs more cultural education he felt and "this education should include changing the aspirational attitude around the car, which has shifted in other parts of the world." He gestured toward the towering finance enclave down the street from where we were meeting. "Those people will drive 5 or 10 blocks to work. They are dressed for the job

and obsessed with appearance, so they are not going to get on a bus or get on a bike. That kind of priority disorder fucks up society."

I lead with Mikki's story not because it is the most inspirational example of working on traffic in the social interest, but rather because his narrative related so clearly how everyday exposure to the mobility situation can unfold into a broader social analysis and problematization. I have already noted that pragmatism is a philosophy of how and why we think (Menand, 1997) and that Dewey's political philosophy is constructed from the first premise that problematic situations agitate us into inquiry. The first step in inquiry is thought: "The first result of evocation of inquiry is that the situation is taken, adjudged, to be problematic, and that this happens because it cannot be given over to our usual way of operating. To see that a situation requires inquiry is the initial step in inquiry" (Dewey, 1938, p. 229).

There is then, as Kadlec (2007) notes, a striking difference between Deweyian epistemology and that of critical theory. Whereas critical theorists tend to view lived experience as a "surface realm corrupted by ideology" that can only be penetrated by a "transcendental form of Reason" (p. 13), pragmatism operates more on the Whiteheadian maxim that 'the more one looks, the more one sees' (Stengers, 2011). For pragmatists everyday experience is common fund for the creative development of social connection and worldly intelligence; it is through being confronted with problematic situations, in particular, that we find ourselves adventuring out to know more. So while Adrián Correa, author of 2015 post on the Colombian political blog Las 2 Orillas entitled "And the Culprit of the Mobility Chaos in Bogotá?," feels that it "is the custom in this

country,[that] seldom are located the real, structural causes of the problems that trouble us," the pragmatist emphasizes the way that problematic situations launch the search for culprits, however erroneous the final destination may be (in Correa's view).

The problem provokes, but the movement from being bothered to critically questioning "its meaning, its conditions, and its goals," as Foucault put it in his very pragmatic analysis of problematization (1998, p. 117), is by no means guaranteed. Many consequences are "felt rather than perceived," Dewey (1927, p. 131) points out—"suffered but not known" because "they are not, by those whose experience them, referred to their origins." Both Dewey and Foucault argued that thought "was freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem…." (Foucault, 1998, p. 117). More will be said about freedom in the conclusion, but the point to be made here is that making a sustained effort to 'refer a problem to its origins' is ultimately a positive act occurring through volition or the exercise of critical habits.

I was reminded of this when I completed a research exercise in which I 'shadowed' Carolina, a 30-year-old schoolteacher friend, on her daily commute in May 2015. As we bumped along in a little blue SITP and talked about traffic, Carolina easily relayed her feelings about the commute ("this is worst part of my day") and her personal strategies for coping. Yet when asked, "what is to blame for the transportation difficulties in the city?," she responded with a shrug. "I don't know, the Ministry of Transportation?"—an institution that oversees national traffic policy but is a lesser actor in Bogotá mobility. Every Bogotano I met problematized the mobility situation to some

extent; moving successfully in the city depended on it. Yet some treaded further, more curiously, more publically out into it to become more invested inquirers in its deep causes and it social consequences.

Democratic journeys: tinkering

From problematization, as we saw in Mikki's case, it is one short step to 'tinkering' with the problem, or making a transformation to the situation in an effort at reconstructing it.[14] Mikki moved from thinking more socially about the traffic problem to designing a technology that 'fits' it and operates in the public interest. More serious inquiry requires this kind of invention and intervention—requires that the political subject 'roll up her sleeves' and produce "knowledges, symbols, instruments, and equipments" capable of grasping the questions that problems raise (Latour, 2007, p. 103) and "project[ing] agencies that order the occurrence" of the problem, as Dewey (1927, p. 131) put it.

Figure 9: Ya viene la Bogotá del bolardo de Peñalosa (Here comes the Bogotá of Peñalosa's Bolardo). Source: http://joserepelin.com/2015/12/27/ya-viene-la-bogota-del-bolardo-de-penalosa/. Published December 27, 2015, on the personal blog of Jose Repelin.

[14] Technically, from a pragmatic perspective that sees thought as intimately tied up with action, problematizing mentally is already tinkering to the extent that it compels a change in behavior on the part of a subject material embroiled in the problem she considers.

Tinkering can happen in ways small and big, discursive and material.

Take the cartoon above (Figure X) by an unknown author that I encountered when it circulated on social media. The sign in the cartoon reads, roughly, "End of Humane Bogotá." *Bogotá Humana* was the name of former leftist Mayor Gustavo Petro's pro-poor social platform. Unpopular among the elite and the media in part because he was seen as mismanaging the traffic problem, Petro was elected by the poorer social classes, and he took a multitude efforts of on their behalf in his term in areas like education. '*Bolardos*' (bollards) are the stumpy little concrete posts in the image that one encounters all over the sidewalks of Bogotá. The city has been full of bolarados since the first Enrique Peñalosa administration in 2001-2003. The purpose of the bolardo is to keep cars off of the sidewalks that, before the Peñalosa years, were frequently used as *de facto* parking lots. The popular critique of Peñalosa is that he is elitist and that a lot of his public space interventions were window dressing that didn't broach social issues like poverty and social exclusion. Additionally, it is said that Peñalosa's brother built the bolardos and that Peñalosa had strong financial ties to the construction industry, such that all the infrastructure-building he pursued during his tenure as mayor padded the pockets of the Peñalosas. In its own small way, this cartoon and its inventor participate in the reconstruction of the mobility problem by asking (or perhaps reminding) the public to find an inverted political meaning in the ubiquitous bolardo: no longer a symbol of saving of public space for all, as the state would have it, the bolardo becomes an anti-social incursion on public space in the service of an elite urban vision and the personal financial interest of an elitist politician. The situation is subtly transformed.

Just as some Bogotanos problematize more deeply than others, some tinker more seriously than others with traffic. More 'serious' tinkering means more experimental—that is, not just adjusting the situation by throwing a cartoon out into the world, say, but by intervening, observing, and changing the intervention as a result of observed results in a more processual movement such as the one undertaken by the bicycle group *Biciterritorializando*. When I met one of the founding members of the collective Biciterritorializando ('bicycle territorializing') in a noisy student cafeteria in the basement of Bogotá's *Universidad Nacional,* Tatiana (last name withheld at her request) informed me that her group had just launched Phase 2 of their organization: "Apropriarse el territorio." I got the sense that they, too, were trying to figure out what it meant. What they could see at that point was that it was a step up from Phase 1 which, in hindsight, had lacked cohesive vision, made up as it was of a hodgepodge of interventions in their lower-middle class neighborhood of Kennedy. Still, Phase 1 was still an evolution on what we might be called Phase 0, which was just Tatiana and their radical friends from *La Universidad Nacional* riding their bikes together and scheming for the first time about how the experience of cycling in the city had potential as a radical democratic tool.

In phase 2, as Tatiana put it, the group was working with more focus "to promote consciousness among the poor in our neighborhoods and generate a feeling in people that they have a right to the city as a political space, in the sense of developing an understanding, a critique and form of intervening in urbanism." Biciterritorializando was organizing workshops where "we use the bicycle and our experiences of the lack of infrastructure and in-access to the space of the street as an excuse to rethink the city from

a ‘pro-poor perspective.” Tatiana offered this ‘pro-poor’ perspective on cycling that her group favored in explicit contrast to the work of some other bike groups in the city—of which I found at least 10 of various stripes, all of them developing in their own way cycling as transit mode as a tool for remaking and intervening in the urban order of things (see Chapter 4). Tatiana explained:

> The people in the north already have access to the city in various senses. They already have all the infrastructure and services, and they can choose to ride bicycles out of political correctness. For the lower classes it is about speed and cost. [In Phase 1] we promoted the bicycle, but later we realized that we do not need to as we had done at first, because people already use it out of necessity.

What was especially impressive about Tatiana and Biciterritorializando’s project was this last intuition: that the necessity of moving each day, in this case by bicycle, and the fact of having shared experiences of that movement, “the lack of infrastructure and in-access to the space of street” that Tatiana mentioned, could be made politically useful. That is, that commuting could be transformed from a drudgery into a transformational experience if given the right conditions and frame and impelled toward that end.

Indeed, this is an intuition that all the bike groups made use of in their own way, (although it tended to be obscured by adulation of the tool itself, the bicycle): that traffic is fount of common experience, a stressful and negative and frustrating experience but one that, if altered or tinkered with, might permit for new socialites and political consciousness to take hold. The experience of cycling is an instrument through which the problem itself—the problem of the city, of traffic, of urban sociality—is understood, redefined, and gathered round differently. Tatiana saw this work as a form of political participation in explicit contrast to formal avenues of political participation. Complaining

that the city only provides "fictitious spaces of public participation like the Table of the Bicycle (Mesa de La Bici)" a civil society group that she sees as made up of 'advocates' who actually work for the state, Tatiana saw the work of Biciterritorializando as bypassing the state and stepping out directly into the public problem of mobility to rework it in the broader social interest.

Democratic journeys: attaching

If 'tinkering' is about meddling with a problem, attachment names an entanglement yet more involved and ambitious. The Bogotanos I met who were attached to mobility had effectively organized their lives, livelihoods and social and political ambitions around reconstructing the situation or some aspect of it. Attachment is, most radically, not about wishing for a future where the problem disappears and nothing else changes; it is about working towards a *different* social future to be enacted by feeding of the energy and urgency of the situation. Above all, attachment expresses 'optimism' in Lauren Berlant's (2011) sense: a willingness to risk committing to an alternative social vision in spite of the difficult realities that can feed complacency and depression: failures of formal democracy, uncertainty about the future, and "all the crisis, chaos and injustice in front of us" (p. 261).

The story of Jaime González and the bicycle taxis ('bicitaxis') exemplifies a democratic journey leading to attachment. González is president and founder of the Federation of BiciTaxistas, a guild that advocates on behalf of the bicitaxi industry. In late March 2015, my research assistant María Paula and I took a long trip out to González's humble office in outer Bosa, a poor district in Southeast Bogotá. Bicitaxis are

not legally recognized elements of Bogotá's transportation mix, but they serve a vital function. They fill holes in transit service left in the wake of state formalization, and they have proliferated massively in last 10 years. "The state is changing public bus service to the blue buses of the SITP, and the SITP has stops," González explained, contrasting the new, centrally-managed bus operations with the old informal system in which buses dropped off and picked up passengers at any point in a route. "The bus will stop here, and the next time way over there. So there is a lot of opportunity for us." Bicitaxis have also proliferated because of the problem of unemployment and underemployment in Bogotá, especially in poor neighborhoods like Bosa. There are now, according González, at least 10,500 bicitaxis "and probably 20,000 families" living off them.

Although he was now among this transportation mode's most visible advocates, Jaime stumbled by chance into what would become his life ambition. Jaime saw a bicycle taxi for the first time only 10 years prior. As he tells the story:

> I was working as an employee in a company and I earned the minimum. But my family was growing and I could not support them. So I quit and started selling ice creams from an ice cream cart. I had to walk a lot in order to sell and one day I walked way over to Soacha, and I saw one of those little cars (bicitaxis). It belonged to a young man who worked well hidden from the eyes of the state out in Soacha, and I asked him if I could see it. A customer approached and so I left my little ice cream car and give him a ride. I liked it and I earned like 800 pesos in three minutes. After that my mind ran away with me. I had the boy take me to the factory where a man was constructing these and I later asked him to make me one. I started to offer rides here in Bosa and so it began.

'It' I took to refer to Jaime's unexpected political journey, which is very much ongoing.

From simply working as a bicitaxista, over the intervening decades González's goal has grown to include organizing and protecting the emergent bicitaxi industry, the precarious workers who compose it, and their families. The Federation does this, in part,

by pushing the state to "give us [the bicitaxis] a little more attention" so that they can achieve order and security for workers.

> What do we want? We want to be legal, so that we can be contracted to ensure the security of children, by bringing them back and forth to school and daycare. With all the evil (insecurity) there is, we want to bring them safely…We want to educate our drivers so that they have a grade level sufficient for the job—in this neighborhood, there are people who cannot read, who cannot add. We have already petitioned SENA (the public technical college) to see if they might be able to offer us classes. Our guild also receives elderly workers; there are people pedaling who are 75 years. We have single mothers pedaling. We just want well being for the *bicitaxistas*—that come what may, they will have social security and health insurance. We want for single mothers to have a place to leave their children. When we are legal we will start working on organizing childcare. So all these little things.

In order to achieve these 'little things,' González and his Federation called on the state continually in a pragmatic way. Their process of inquiry has involved not just 'crawling up inside' traffic but also exploring the state apparatus in order to figure out how its machinery works and how it might be manipulated. "At first we did not know who we had to talk to," as Jaime put it, "what the regulations were, who the Secretary of Mobility was." But they learned and won victories in time.

With these victories, González' democratic ambitions have grown and moved further into state-institutional territory. "Because we protested peacefully, because we organized negotiation tables, because we made this federation and went in search of smaller associations to partner, because we have pushed the state and been an obstacle," González said, the police no longer harass the bicitaxis as before and no longer ignore them when they need help, such as when they are robbed. Though bicitaxis still exist in a grey area of legality, "everyday I have more motivation," González said.

> I love this work. Imagine, before the bicitaxis I was just an employee at a company. Maybe because of all the struggling and the credibility that I have now with the

> people (*la gente*), well the elections for the city council, the mayor and the *ediles* (the leaders of Bogotá's *localidades*) are coming, and my affiliates have asked if we will run for *edil* in Bosa. So we are in process, and we are going to put on the campaign (as a slogan) 'Pedaling for Bosa.' Yes? So the people and I are going to do it, because I am going to keep fighting for this and for them.

González's political evolution, from employee at a company to professional guild leader to hopeful *edil* of his *localidad*, would not feature in most critical urban geographical analyses of normatively desirable democratic behavior. It instead expresses the kind of pragmatic action that is accessible in actually-existing urban worlds where subjects must construct upon what is given in the environment; where the state cannot be relied upon to deliver for 'the people' but neither can it necessarily be rejected as a resource; and where the constant challenge of sustaining livelihood means that democratic and economic ambition often co-mingle.

Moreover, Jamie's journey is not anchored by on any exceptional and revelatory moment, other than perhaps his first encounter with the bicitaxi. Jamie's political subjectivity, ambition, and attachment grew with the development of his capacities to make meaningful social transformation in the situation. In other words Jaime became, in time, more 'powerful' and more 'free' in Dewey's understanding of these terms. It is with an exploration of these themes of power and freedom within the context of a broader discussion of Dewey's political liberalism that this chapter concludes.

Conclusion: liberalism and the 'part of those with no part'

To conclude I want to confront squarely two aspects of Dewey's liberalism, one that I think recommends him to urban geographers and another that needs significant

redress in order to make his democratic theory explicitly compatible with political values of equality and justice. The aspect of his liberalism that recommends him, as I have already intimated, is his interest in the mechanics of how humans become invested in and capable of making socio-environmental transformation via a developmental process—a perspective that contrasts markedly to geographers' tendency to imagine political interests and practices as materializing (a bit mysteriously) from deeper interests established outside of the urban process itself (Barnett & Low, 2004) and/or to imagine political subjectivation as happening in rare events of breakthrough and recognition. In these concluding comments, I will take the discussion of this point further by making explicit what has been implicit throughout: that power in Dewey's pragmatism is not about oppression or restraint 'from above,' but is rather a positive theory of power that focuses on how individuals and groups gain the ability to define purposes and act in accordance with them. Ideally this happens in a social environment explicitly organized toward the growth of this capacity for effective action, which Dewey called 'freedom'.

A second point that does not recommend Dewey, and with which I begin, is directly related to the latter point. This is that, because his interest in dynamics of oppression is relatively muted (at least in his writing), Dewey can seem to brush off the problem of differential access to the development of powers of freedom and how the dominant forces of his day actually worked to constrain people's lives (Allen, 2008). If the problem with post-political theories is that the city tends to end up evacuated of what the analyst considers to be normatively valuable democratic action, Dewey's liberalism can make it seem like any action on the problem in the collective interest on the part of

members of affected public is normatively desirable. Although in his political practice he focused especially on democratic education for excluded elements of society—for 'the part with no part,' in a broad sense—his writing fails to parse action on public problems carried out by more and less empowered members of affected publics.

This problem of Dewey's emphasis on participation among the public in general was crystalized in my research on the democratic engagements of the self-described 'busólogos,' or members of the 'activist' group Usuarios SITP. "Busólogos" translates to people who are into the systematicity and logic of the buses. These were the first and only people I met in Bogotá (including the actual designers of the SITP) who felt the new SITP bus system was "mucho más claro y lógico" (much more clear and logical) than old buseta system that had served the city. Usuarios SITP was founded by two engineers and one law student—all men in their late 20s to late 30s and of upper *estratos*—whose self-appointed mission was effectively to spread the gospel of SITP as a better and more efficient public transportation system. ["Our goal is mobility!" rings the Usuarios SITP's slogan]. The group's work has included developing a cell phone-app that gives the users updates on the system and helps them navigate it; sending ambassadors out to SITP stops to help new users make the switch from the TPC (busetas) to the new SITP; and hosting social events where the busólogos gather to ride the new lines as they appear out to the peripheral neighborhoods and explore parts of the city they had never visited before.

Usuarios SITP represents educated, upper class mobility sensibilities and priorities: "Now even foreigners like you can use the buses!" one of them exclaimed happily when I spoke one day at a café with the group's founders (interview, March 19,

2015). He was describing the way in which in the little SITP "everyone was safer" because now real companies managed the buses and "the companies have lawyers and insurance and if something goes wrong there is someone who can respond to you," ignoring the displacement of the TPC system and the livelihoods attached to it discussed in Chapter 2 as well as the class privilege that attends the expectation that lawyers and insurance will respond to one's claims. Usuarios SITP's form of democratic participation was effectively to consolidate the transformation and formalization of the mobility system on behalf of the state and the upper class interests it tends to represent. The Usuarios SITP members came into the situation educated and capacitated with multiple skills that gave them powerful avenues for involving themselves and exerting influence in the situation.

If "[t]he task of democracy is forever that of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute" as Dewey put it (1976, p. 230), then a clear focus on buttressing marginal subjects instead of the proverbial 'busólogos' would be essential to advancing the project of human equality. Here I agree with Derickson (2016) that Rancière's emphasis on 'the part with not part' is crucial—albeit in a neutered sense of the term that emphasizes the general idea that any genuinely democratic process elevates the excluded and that 'the excluded' will differ according to social context, and that sheds much of Rancière's philosophical edifice of police orders, constitutive outsides, and the location of politics in "rendering visible the partition of the sensible" (p. 47). A pragmatic interpretation of 'the part with no part' would simply suggest that, for democracy to make sense as a project of equality in an unequal world, it has to be a

process of helping the marginalized to participate meaningfully and effectively in the collaborative and contestatory play of the transformation of shared socio-environments.

This leads back to the point about processes of human capacitation—democratic and otherwise—and the relation of this to Dewey's liberalism and his positive theory of power. "If we strip [the liberal] creed from its adventitious elements," Dewey (1935) once wrote, by which he meant the undue focus of some strands of liberalism on the right to property,

> there are enduring values for which earlier liberalism stood. These values are the development of the inherent capacities of individuals made possible through liberty, and the central role of free intelligence in inquiry, discussion and expression (p. 40).

Life for Dewey was a continual process of adjustment to changing circumstances, and the intelligent person (and the intelligent democratic community) was one who could deliberately reconstruct experience and use naturally occurring interactions to bring about desired outcomes (Elridge, 1998). Intelligence is central to, if not wholly constitutive of, what Dewey called "freedom": the power to frame purposes and to execute or carry into effect purposes framed (1938/1997, p. 67). Different situations succeed one another, but as the freer individual passes from one situation to another his world and purpose expands, much in the way that Jaime González' world and purpose expanded through his evolving engagement with the traffic situation. It is an account of the enabling, and not the repressive, side to power that pragmatism largely has to offer critical geographers, as well as perhaps a provocation to expand our sense of political value past revolutionary upheaval, to include even a liberal concern with the maximization of the potential of individual human lives.

At any rate, Dewey's philosophy is unique in tying the expansion of an individual's capacity to transform the socio-environment into a democratic question, and he saw individual capacitation as a social problem. Dewey's (1976) concept of creative democracy referred to an ideal society that would foster the self-amplifying capacity of individuals and groups to collaboratively create the world they collectively choose to inhabit (Lake, 2017). For Dewey,

> the problem of democracy becomes the problem of that form of social organization, extending to all areas and ways of living, in which the powers of individuals shall not be merely released from mechanical constraint but shall be fed, sustained and directed (1935, p. 39-40).

Dewey always insisted that the dichotomy between individual and society was a false one—he thought individuals could only reach their unique personal potential in a rich social environment . This recognition that an individual's power and freedom was at bottom a relational effect of social interaction and emergent from the material of the social fabric made Dewey as anti-capitalist as any of his Marxist contemporaries[15], even if he rejected revolutionary prescriptions on the grounds that, "[i]t requires an unusually credulous faith in the Hegelian dialectic of opposites to think that all of a sudden the use of force by a class will be transmuted into a democratic classless society" (1935, p. 91).

With this in mind, Dewey advocated less for revolutionary transformation than for formal capacitation of 'the people': experiments in education for democracy, self-

[15] For example, from the same text: "If early liberals had put forth their special interpretation of liberty as something subject to historic relativity they would not have frozen it into a doctrine to be applied at all time and under all circumstances. Specifically they would have recognized effective liberty is a function of the social conditions existing at any time. If they had done this, they would have known that as economic relations become dominantly controlling forces in setting the pattern of human relations, the necessity of liberty for individuals which they proclaimed will require the social control of economic forces in the interest of the great mass of individuals" (Dewey, 1935, p. 42).

expansion, and social transformation among the disenfranchised was a cornerstone of his social and political practice (if, again, this was sometimes lost in his democratic writings). Dewey saw the school as the essential institution of a democratic society: a place where people learn how to think—how to recognize, approach, and creatively reconstruct problems—and not what to think. His (certainly naïve) vision of an ideal, participatory democratic society was one where a populist army of educated 'experience reconstructors' would develop habits that would allow them work entrpreneurially on social problems in situ, developing ways forward that would be respondent to the particularities of given situation.

Dewey's sense that democracy might arrive, if it would at all, through meaningful investment in human development (and not, say, through breakthrough moments of recognition in 'egalibertarian spaces') was shared by at least some Bogotanos I spoke with. A conversation I had with Alexander, a rapper of *estrato* 1 that I met on a buseta (TPC) who earns his living from tips from passengers, affected me greatly in this regard. While I was travelling on *Calle 54* in central Bogotá one day in April, 2015, Alexander hopped on the bus and performed an incredible piece—contemplative, intellegent, and feminist—about the way that society pressures women to be taken up into sexuality at a young age and about the ways that they can be mistreated by men who convince them that they care. I heard a lot of rappers on buses in Bogotá, but I was so moved by Alexader that when he hopped off the bus a few blocks later, tips in pocket and boombox in hand, I followed him off.

Alexander was 28 and lived in peripheral Ciudad Bolívar. He had been working informally as an entertainer on buses for 13 years. When he was younger he performed as a clown, but as he got older he "lost his jovial spirit." Now, as a more contemplative adult, his goal was to make people think instead of laugh. "Some people affect society by marching, some people sing about love. I am trying to jar people out of their usual patterns of thought, to make them contemplate things they wouldn't otherwise." Alexander was definitely concerned about the mobility problem, he said, and he saw the transition to the SITP as one of many examples of Colombia selling its resources off to multinational corporations. Yet Alexander did not feel that mobility or even the neoliberalization of the economy was the most pressing problem for people like him. The mobility problem faces the whole city, and one of its organizing political dynamics is that the rich cannot buy their way out of it. This is not the case with education, which is highly classed in Colombia. Elites use private schools to keep learning and networks of privilege closed off, and the public schools are by all accounts extremely poor.

As Alexander put the point,

> Education is the worst problem we face and that this country faces. The government thinks that because we are poor, the key to development is to find money. But development starts by developing the minds of the people, by teaching people to think. That's what I would tell a Senator if I ever had the chance to sit down and talk to one. I would love to study political science someday. But where I grew up, in Ciudad Bolivar, the schools are terrible, horrible. They barely teach you to read, they teach you to add and count, so you can manage money, and that is about it. They teach you who discovered America, but who cares? They should be teaching us about foreign affairs, about ISIS, about development in African countries. That is why I re-enforce constantly with my daughter the importance of education, of reading. Of the money I make, I maybe spend 10 *mil pesos* (about $5) a day on food, and I try to put the rest into savings so I can afford to send her to private school one day. Advancing the

> country is about education, but they want to keep us ignorant, so they don't let us learn. When someone gets educated, they pass it along.

While Dewey understood that education could not eliminate all substantive inequalities in society, he shared Alexander's intuition about the radical power of education and viewed investing in the human capacity for creative transformation as the best way forward toward a more functionally democratic society. Part of my argument throughout the dissertation is that the traffic situation itself serves an 'arena' for political education and democratic capacitation for Bogotanos. Yet the barriers to entry into the traffic problem—to analysis, exploration, deliberation, inquiry, tinkering, inventing, attaching, disagreeing, and combating—exist and are still stacked against the poor and, especially in my research, against women. Perhaps, as Alexander suggested, the most necessary 'foothold' into political experience for 'the part with no part' would be a formal education that might allow them better entry into problematizing, tinkering with, and attaching to new futures in problematic situations.

CHAPTER FOUR *Rodadas, Colados* and *Metros*: Making Publics

There is a tradition in radical democratic theory—and by extension in the geographies of urban democracy that draw on it— of suspicion toward the public sphere and toward the work of what are sometimes derisively called 'bourgeois publics'. The critiques of the limitations of the public sphere are various. Mark Purcell (2008) notes that some radical democratic theorists argue that the "liberal-democratic model limits democracy to a narrowly defined public sphere, a sphere more or less coterminous with the state" (p. 83); here the public sphere becomes fully part of the 'police order' (in the language of the last few chapters) such that the activity within it is benign and simply reproduces the non-democratic, hierarchical conditions of the city. For theorists such as Jodi Dean (2009), the problem with the public sphere (among other things) is that deliberative discourse tends to usurp the place of actual political action. For commentators on Global South cities like Partha Chatterjee (2004), extreme socioeconomic inequalities mean that vast swaths of the urban population are democratic citizens only in name but substantively excluded from the liberal public sphere—a reality that for him means that the majority of urbanites (in Indian cities, at least) are "the governed" (in the Foucauldian sense) rather than the liberal-democratic subjects of their own governance. This, for Chatterjee, throws into question the "authoritative status of the normative claims of Western political theory for our contemporary world" (p. 23).

All of this might be summed up in the idea that critical theorists argue, in various ways, "that the 'shape' of a public sphere might place limits on the kinds of people who can access its shared social spaces, the styles and forms that public address can take, and

the topics that are considered proper matters of discussion," (Iveson 2011, p. 23). Without denying the reality of that statement—that any public sphere has limitations in terms of scope, inclusivity and effectiveness— this chapter nevertheless inverts the tenor of the discussion. My research indicated that the idea of an isolated bourgeois public sphere of elite conversation around 'little questions' was not descriptive of the mobility public sphere in Bogotá. Instead, I found that an emergent public sphere—constituted in and across communication networks, public spaces, public right-of-ways, and transportation systems—that was notably porous, differentiated, and action-oriented, serving as a foundational interactive mechanism out of which civil society groups grew, from the liberal to the radical. If not taking 'taking the reigns of power' exactly, these publics and counterpublics (Fraser, 1990) were working discursively and materially on interesting questions that were not state- or status-quo serving, and in ways that drew in members of Bogotá's broad lower-middle class (the '2s' and '3s' that make up 66% of the population). These deliberations exceeded the question of 'What to do about mobility?' and rather, via this problem, opened on to 'bigger' questions like "Who are 'we'?", "How should we live?" and "What does 'democracy' mean?"

Pragmatic publics

Before moving on to these empirical scenes of public-making, I would like to paint a minimal picture of the nature of a 'public' from a pragmatic perspective to serve as the foundation of the discussion. In Dewey's political ontology, publics are the primary political units of interest—the equivalent of 'the people' or 'body politic' in democratic political theory, or of 'classes' in Marxist theory. Publics belong to neither a

constituted geopolitical unit nor an opposing side of the Hegelian dialectic, but instead to a problem that renders them 'divided together' [or antagonistically implicated (Marres, 2007)] in situations of material harm. Perhaps the best way to think about publics is not as obviating these or other political or social group concepts, but as complicating their boundaries as problems emerge into the material fabric of life. For example, as I discussed in Chapter 2, pragmatic ideas are often invoked in theories of transnational politics that consider how issues spill over jurisdictions and borders; Dewey was interested in the implications for democratic politics of the geographical extension and increasing functional complexity of social relationships with the proliferation of 'oddly-shaped' problems. At the same time, as we will see in the coming vignettes, there are certainly class dynamics and antagonisms at work in the relationships between the publics and counterpublics of traffic in Bogotá. Yet these groups do not organize themselves strictly along class lines, nor do the political desires they develop shed the particularities and contingencies of the material scene in which they were shaped to become purely 'about class' itself.

Yet, mirroring the concept of class in Marxian thought, publics exist only 'virtually' inside problematic conditions and must discover themselves—become 'for themselves' rather than just 'in themselves'—so that their entanglement is transformed into a working understanding of their situation that informs collective interest and a plan of action for moving forward. Publics discover themselves through the inquiry' process that I introduced last chapter, although here inquiry takes on richer meaning as a public or social activity with a strongly intercommunicative element. Dewey was interested in the

elementary dynamics by which having an experience and sharing that experience with others as collective 'truth' (which always has a connective function for pragmatists) is necessary to ground the constitution of a group of the collectively interested—a public.

> For beings who observe and think and whose ideas are absorbed by impulses and become sentiments and interests, "we" is as inevitable as "I". But "we" and "our" exist only when the consequences of combined action are perceived and become an object of desire and effort and the results of conjoint experience are considered and transmitted (Dewey, 1927, p. 151).

With this focus on communication about "objects of desire and effort" as the foundation for building 'we's' (publics), we are reminded of Marres' (2005) pithy argument that, for pragmatists, the rule is "no issue, no public": there is no generic, institutionalized public sphere that pre-exists the particular urgency that generates an impulse to understand, communicate, and connect.

It is this that most differentiates Dewey's ideas from those of the cultural theorist Michael Warner (2002), from whom the geographer Kurt Iveson (2011) draws heartily in *Publics and the City*. Citing Warner, Iveson argues that public making means "building a world" by "constructing a scene through which ideas, claims, expressions and the objects through which they are articulated can circulate to others" (4). This definition of publicity is unobjectionable as far as it goes, but it clouds over the *why* of public making. Certainly "[p]ublic discourse says not only: 'Let a public exist,' but: 'Let it have this character, speak this way, see the world in this way'" (Warner, 2002, p. 82), but what pragmatism contributes is the basic sense that it is the appearance of the obstacles of life that suggests the problem of how 'we' are and of how the world ought to be seen, and that compels us to enlist others in our visions as part of a movement of remedial action (which may, of

course, terminate only in conversation that is 'remedial' in the sense of giving us a better grasp on what is happening and thus allowing us to act differently on it).

A second thing to be pointed out explicitly is that scenes of circulation are presupposed by the idea of a public. Dewey's naturalistic understanding of action and of the formation of democratic publics informs a view of the spaces of democracy as transactionally contingent and enacted in relation to problematic situations (Barnett, 2007). Outside of antagonistic entanglement, for Dewey the increasing sociotechnical integration of human societies had a second political meaning: communicative infrastructures made the exploration of problems across geographies possible:

> Green and red lines, marking out political boundaries, are on the maps and affect legislation and jurisdiction of courts, but railways, mails and telegraph-wires disregard them. The consequences of the latter influence more profoundly those living within the legal local units than do boundary lines (Dewey, 1927, p. 301-302).

Infrastructures of communication explode political boundaries, but scenes of circulation that support inquiry into problems are also variegated and publics are 'assembled' in the sense of putting together through various combinations of devices, spaces, infrastructures, and mediums (Latour, 2005a)—on their own or with the assistance of external agents like the state (or even academic geographers; see Whatmore & Landström, 2011). Much as with Fraser's (1990) late-twentieth-century U.S. feminist counterpublic and its "variegated array of journals, bookstores, publishing companies, film and video distribution networks, lecture series, research centers, academic programs, conferences, conventions, festivals, and local meeting places" (p. 123), we will find an array of spaces and circulations as foundational to publicity about mobility in Bogotá.

'Deliberation' moves between and among different scenes of circulation: existing infrastructures and imagined mobility systems, public spaces and squares, traditional and new media, 'town hall' meetings organized by protesters or by the state, and more.

Who are 'we'?: colados *and* vendedores

"Here are things as they are: the men, women and children who sneak on (*colarse*—technically, to "queue jump") TransMilenio do not deserve any consideration." So begins a post entitled, "La hipocresía de colarse en TransMilenio" **(**the hypocrisy of sneaking on TransMilenio) on the personal blog of journalist Andrés G. Borges (2013, May 8), which circulated widely through social media and was later reprinted in *El Tiempo.* When I left Bogotá in June 2015, the *colados*—the term for people who sneak on to the TransMilenio through tactics like jumping turnstiles—had become something of a public epidemic. "Given that TransMilenio is in the worst of its crisis, one no longer sees two or three colados like a few years ago but rather throngs of 20 or 30 every minute," Borges wrote (see Figure 16). An administrator at TransMilenio (Romero, interview, November 20, 2014) told me the colados were filling an equivalent of 390 TransMilenio *biarticulado* buses everyday and costing the city hundreds of thousands of dollars per month in lost revenue. And this despite efforts by the local state to convince the public that they were 'only hurting themselves' by opting not to pay, as in the giant banner that hung in Ricaurte station announcing that "Quien salta te asalta" ('he who jumps (a turnstile) assaults *you*').

In writing to the public on his blog, Borges' hoped to help constitute an ethical 'we' of 'good' citizens who would continue to pay for TransMilenio despite a 'squeezing in' by enemies on both flanks: "Surely there will come a day when to be honest will not pay in this city…Above [there are] the powerful, who charge us for whatever they feel like at whatever cost they feel like; below, the cheat, the thief, makes fun of our scruples and makes our lives difficult." Borges called out to the public of mobility—to those fellow bus riders who suffered the indignities of TransMilenio and of traffic more broadly—to respond with a practice of "dignified" citizenship wherein "when we tire, we yell for our rights, but no matter how poor or how weary we are of the System, the next day we pay the fare."

Figure 10: *Colados* leaving *alimentadores* (free feeder buses) and sneaking on to the adjacent TransMilenio platform. To pay to use the system, riders would cross the bridge from which the photo was taken and pass through a ticketing turnstile. Source: Unknown. Image circulated on social media networks in April 2015.

What is interesting is about the colados is that, if they did not 'deserve any consideration' in Borges' view, certainly they were receiving it. A similar attention is accorded the *vendedores ambulantes* (moving vendors) who are not supposed to be found on the TransMilenio, but who take their places on buses and in stations everyday regardless. In transit in Bogotá vendedores ambulantes board buses to rap, sing, perform

and sell peanuts or treats, or they take up posts at stations and near stops (see Figure 17). While venders were regular features of the old TPC system (recall Alexander from last chapter), the TransMilenio and the SITP are intended to be modern systems where that activity is understood to impede the smooth flow of mass mobilization. Yet as one focus group participant at the LGBT center (see Chapter 1) put it, the system "is saturated [with vendors]. One enters in front, another in the middle, another to side, [offering] a whole mess of things [for sale]. It's striking." Thus the question was raised for her, and for the group: "It's a public service, they shouldn't do that, right?" Another participant quickly responded, "but the venders are *part* of the public, part of us. It's about the right to work. If you do not have alternative and you find yourself in extreme situation, you have a right to sell."

Figure 11: A vendor poses with his wares. Photo by Pilar Salcedo

On the debate went, in my focus group, among the mobility public at large, and sometimes *within* a single person, played out as a deliberation of allegiances: several interviewees from different *estratos* reported struggling back and forth between shunning these 'irritating' impediments to the consolidation of a modern mobility and feeling an

ethical imperative to affirm their rightful place among 'us' through actions such as purchasing and tipping. Through the circulation of aberrant bodies, the dominant public found itself continually confronted with 'others' and liminal figures popping out 'in front and from the middle and to the side' to unsettle the consolidation of a tidy 'we' wherein there is 'a place for everyone and everyone in their place' (in Rancière's sense) without remainder.

This scene on transit infrastructures suggests a different picture of the nature and spatiality of public interaction in Southern cities than arrives via two dominant narratives in urban studies and planning. On the one hand, it is argued that the metropolises of Latin America are fragmented into geographically contiguous yet socially differentiated *mundos aislados* (isolated worlds) of rich and poor, formal and informal economy, center and periphery, with multiple worrying consequences that are social, cultural and political (Sabatini, 2004; Saravi, 2008). Segregation manifests not just from where you live, but also from daily patterns in which people stay in their own worlds and do not encounter and interact with one another (Jirón, Lange & Bertrand, 2010; Miciukiewicz & Vigar, 2012). Chatterjee's (2004) argument about the exclusivity of the bourgeois public sphere—that it extends only narrowly to encompass only the elite geographies of the megacity—can be seen as a democratic critique analogous to this fragmentation argument.

On the other hand, there is a theory operative in the practice of urban design that suggests that network infrastructures like transportation systems 'tie the city together' and can re-integrate broken cities (Cesafsky, 2017). Recall that part of the celebratory

discourse around TransMilenio among urbanists was that it interconnected the city from North to South, East to West, and thereby mediated against social fragmentation by bringing people together and creating a better social mix. Transit was a scene of forced encounter and reckoning: the question of the contours and loyalties of 'the' political community was continually raised and closure on the same question impeded by the insistent presence of the colados and vendedores. Yet what my research found on TransMilenio was neither fragmentation or integration exactly, but rather a scene of forced encounter and reckoning: the question of the contours and loyalties of 'the' political community was continually raised and closure on the same question impeded by the insistent presence of the colados and vendedores.

For their part, the colados and vendedores showed signs not just of haphazardly resisting the dominant mobility order, but of organizing themselves via the city's circulatory mechanisms—that is, of building their own 'counterpublics,' as I describe it in the next section—with an emergent, alternative vision of the public good. The colados had come into being by inventing their own form of embodied 'public address'; as Borges put it sardonically in his blog post, they were "so bold as to have even [developed] their own technique and style," which became contagious and was emulated by transit-users-cum-colados across the city. When I saw them interviewed in the news media, the colados were developing a consistent political discourse, justifying their non-normative behavior by noting that TransMilenio really was not truly of and for 'us' in the way Borges insisted: it was run-down and over-crowded, and the equivalent 1 US dollar that they paid for the privilege of using lined the pockets of the *empresarios* rather than

returning to them in repairs and improvements.

In October of 2014, there was an event in which the colados formally organized themselves to protest yet another rise in prices for TransMilenio without service improvement. They executed what was dubbed a 'colatón'—a 'big sneak-on'—wherein packs of riders at different stations throughout the city overwhelmed the security mechanisms protecting the entryway to TransMilenio and streamed into stations and onboard buses in an orchestrated demonstration. In order to promote the colatón, a group calling themselves the Colectivo Mecha Liberteria organized an event page on Facebook and even published an illustrated guide for how to *colarse* (sneak oneself on) safely. As one of the organizers told the online magazine *Pulzo* (Oct 22, 2014**)**, they had "already raised to several administrations the need to deprivatize the service to give quality to the users and not continue to profit only the few families that operate the system," and they would continue to remind the administration of this inconvenient fact through individual and collective 'colado-ing' until the organizational structure of the system changed.

How should 'we' live?: rodadas

If you are out on a Thursday evening in Bogotá, in any *localidad* from the wealthier North to the poorer South, there is a chance you will encounter a *rodada.* A rodada is, most basically, a group bicycle ride. The organizers select a time and meeting place, circulate the message via flyers on street posts or in social media, and cyclists show up to ride together. Many of the cyclist groups in the city (including Bicterritorializando, who we met last chapter) are organized to some extent around the

rodada as a publicity technology, and many have settled on Thursdays as the regular day when riders meet up. The groups—which can range from handfuls to dozens to hundreds of riders—set out together on an urban adventure to some destination in the city decided in advance by the organizers. The rodada is an interesting technology because it is both a 'live action' experiment in living and moving together otherwise in the city and a publicity tool whereby those ways of being are immediately presented to the rest of the city as the rodada circulates. 'Join us!,' the rodada announces. 'See and *be* in the world this way!' Through the rodada we see how the difficulty of living a satisfying life in traffic prompts experimental ways of being otherwise that exceed attempts to simply ameliorate traffic and extends the 'critique' to other social and political ambitions.

It might be argued at the outset that, in promoting an urban lifestyle organized around cycling, the rodada groups are simply working as an arm of the local state that promotes cycling as a key element of the SITP. While this is perhaps true of the more 'central city'/dominant public rodada groups, the groups circulating in the more peripheral parts of Bogotá are more properly examples of what Nancy Fraser (1990) in her well-known essay "Rethinking the Public Sphere" calls 'subaltern publics' or 'counterpublics': subordinated groups who deliberate among themselves about their needs, objectives, and strategies in conversation with, but also in contradistinction to, the dominant public. Fraser argued that when public discourse is understood only as a "single, comprehensive, overarching public," members of subordinated groups "have no arenas for deliberation among themselves about their needs, objectives, and strategies" (p. 120). In fact, Fraser continues "members of subordinated social groups—women,

workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians—have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics" (ibid).

The counterpublics of the bicycle do not conform to a simple bipartite spatio-political imaginary of central city dominance and peripheral resistance, but instead express a pattern of citation, differentiation, and ever-evolving permutation that have amplifying out from an origin at the socio-spatial 'center' of the city. In other words, all the rodada group leaders I spoke with shared a sense that the "bicycle is a way to change the city and the society, its not about the bicycle itself," as *Ciclopaseos de los Miercoles* founder Andrés Vergara told me in an interview (November 4, 2014), but the groups were constructing through discursive and material 'deliberation' different concepts of what was contained in the mobility problem and what bicycling meant for it that were—especially for the peripheral groups—built out of experiences of difference and marginalization among a subset of the urban population (an emergent 'we'). Vergara's group, Ciclopaseos de Los Miercoles, is by most accounts the first rodada group in Bogotá, and it is an elite one that meets in the North of the city. When I first met Vergara in 2012, when he was still just a bicycle activist and before he had been 'absorbed' by the state into a role at the Secretary of Mobility, he told me that in addition to promoting cycling as a different way of being in and moving in the city, the goal of Ciclopaseos was to introduce upper class Bogotanos to parts of the South and West of the city that they would not otherwise visit. In the last five years or so, Ciclopaseos has spawned a plethora of groups organized around axes of social differences like urban geography and gender, and that operate independently in many of the city's 20 *localidades,* where they circulate

the gospel of the 'bici'. There are now Teusacatubici from Teusaquillo; Subaselabici from Suba; Bikennedy from Kennedy; BielaTunal from Tunjuelito; Visibles from Ciudad Bolívar; RuedalaUsme from Usme; Rota 7 from Bosa; and multiple more. [Many of these names are puns combing the name of the *localidad* with an exhortation to ride one's bicycle: 'Sacatubici' (from Teu-sacatubici) roughly translates as 'get out your bike'; 'Subaselabici' is 'get on your bike', etc.] The empirical content in this section comes from interviews and participant observation on *rodadas* with Teusacatubici and RuedalaUsme, as well as supporting commentary from Vergara.

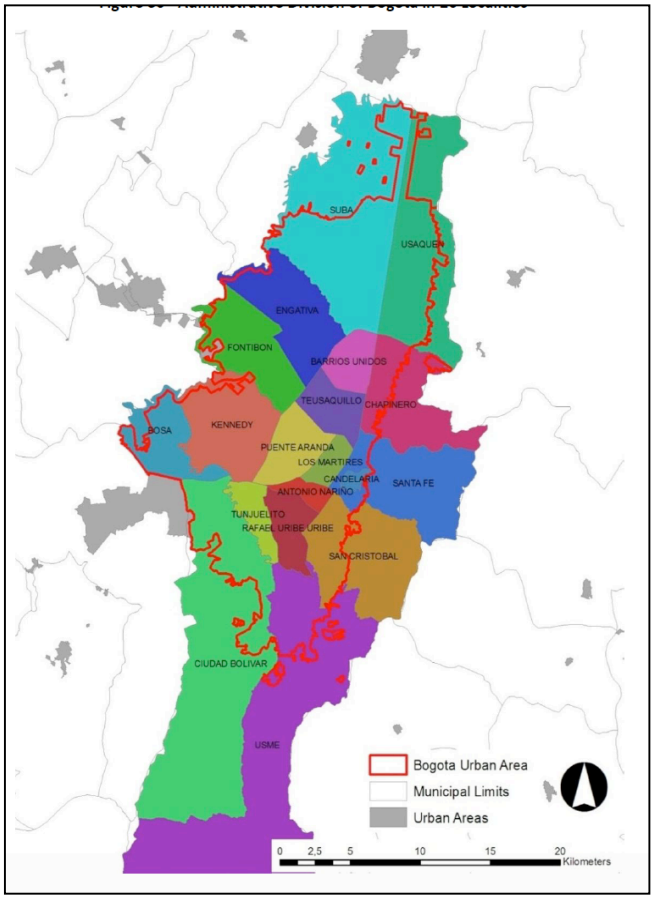

Figure 12: Administrative Division of Bogotá into 20 *localidades*. Teusaquillos is a small, purple region at center. Source: World Bank (2012).

The first rodada group I will discuss, Teusacatubici, sits (like Ciclopaseos de los Miercoles) closer to center of the city in multiple senses and could be argued to constitute part of the 'bourgeois public sphere' (Figure 18). The group meets up on Thursdays on a leafy green parkway that connects *La Universidad Nacional* with historic center of Bogotá and that has become something of a hipster/bohemian enclave. I interviewed two

of the organizers there, Laura and Juan Camilo, before riding with the group one evening mid-April, 2015. Juan Camilo told me that Teusacatubici is a citizen initiative to promote the bicycle as a tool of health and happiness and to experience the city differently: "Buses, taxis, what have you, they erase the image of the city," he told me. Teusacatubici started out as a rodada among friends, but soon established a webpage and opened up to the general public. The group's intimate relationship to the dominant public and the state is revealed in the occupations its organizers: Juan Camilo works for the National Secretary of Transportation and was then tasked to create a National Manuel of Bicycling Infrastructure. Laura once worked for the Colombian city of Medellín's public 'bicis' program.

One of the characteristic habits of the dominant public is to presume to speak for a general 'we' (Fraser 1990), and Teusacatubici's discourse tended to diminish axes of difference in cycling. I asked Juan Camilo, for example, about any differences in 'bicycle philosophy' between Teusacatubici and the other rodada groups, and he answered with a simple demographic inventory: "It's really just the composition of the members. They come from different classes. The Usme group is 1s and 2s, Kennedy is 2s, 3s, and 4s, Fontibón is 1s, 2s, and 3s. This group tends to be a bit older, full of young professionals." He painted the groups as operating in friendly terms. "Nearly everyone rides on Thursday nights and sometimes we pass each other by coincidence and get to greet each other." He mentioned that he had helped the peripheral *rodada* groups start their own clubs by providing logistical and technical support. For her part, although Laura acknowledged problems of insecurity and harassment for women on bikes, she minimized the relevance

of gender difference in cycling when I asked: "there is no segregation according to gender on the bicycle. Just join up, that's it." Laura emphasized the importance of *convivencia* and *conciencia*—conviviality and consciousness. Cyclists, she said, need to be respectful in the same way that cars need to be respectful and "give a good example" by behaving respectfully. This means wearing a helmet and lights, respecting traffic lights and regulations. "Somos todos duenos de la carretera," she emphasized—we are all owners of the road—and the point of their *rodada* was to build community and demonstrate that there is room for everyone. In this way, the perspectives of Teusacatubici shared were of a piece with of in a broader elite discourse wherein the bicycle is imagined as a 'social leveler' that erases class difference.

When I spoke with Diego of RuedalaUsme on February 17, 2014, however, he expressed very different sentiments about what the rodada was for as a public technology and about the relationships between the rodada groups. He described the (virtual) public to which his group appealed as distinctly local: the poor folks in his barrio of Usme who suffered conditions of socio-spatial of exclusion in his very deep South and West, semi-rural, and often dismissed and disregarded *localidad.* "Usme is very from far the center, you can't imagine how difficult it is to get to the center. It's a route that takes an hour, there are millions of potholes, car, taxis, there is no *ciclovia* or *ciclocarril* (two different kinds of bicycle infrastructure)…" Diego said the goal of RuedalaUsme was "to foment the use of the bicycle in the day to day life of the people, for health, for mobility, to be more free, for bunch of reasons like this, because the people need to get out of the 'boxes'" (i.e. automobiles and buses). Every Thursday the group circulates mostly around

Usme, usually attracting 9-35 people. “We get everyone together who ride skateboards, rollerblades, bicycles, unicycles—all non-motorized vehicles—and we take over the two principle streets in Usme.” Usme only has two major access roads and they are both a big danger for bicycles and lack cycling infrastructure. “A lot of times people don’t know that we need ciclorutas because they travel everyday in TransMilenio. So we are trying to demonstrate the need for more infrastructure and also that there are other options for mobilizing yourself. We want them to even consider using bicycles to arrive at their job. We want people to go by bike and to change their way of thinking.”

Diego was critical of the elite rodada groups and their ties to the state and positioned the work of RuedalaUsme in constructive contrast to these other groups and as embedded in the needs of the *localidad*. Some of this was personal and a reaction against experiences of social stigmatization:

> We know groups from the north but its funny because if we are going to meet we always have to go to them because they are afraid to come to Usme. And since we are from Usme there is discriminatory commentary. One time we all got together, all the bike groups, and we arrived and we heard them say, “ay the ñeros have arrived” (ñeros is a derogatory term for young, lower class men from the periphery, similar to ‘thug’ or ‘delinquent’). They said this because we come from the South. But you know what, we’re just normal people. The people think that the more to the South that you live or the poorer you are that you are more ñero or more bad or have less education[16], but they don’t realize that we are just people.

So while they talk or sometimes arrange meetings and pass the more elite rodada groups in certain places, Diego said that RuedalaUsme mostly only communicated with Fontirueda and BiciChia (other groups from the peripheries) and does not have direct relationship with the others. “Mostly we work in Usme.”

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[16] This could mean formal education, but I took it in the cultural-behavioral sense. In Bogotá a *persona educada* is someone with good manners/comports themselves.

Staying local to build up the local *bici* public was also strategic. When I asked Diego at one point in the interview, "Isn't it just easier for the government to ignore you when you circulate so far from the center of the city?", he explained that they were interacting with the center in their own way. The two access roads mentioned above, the Caracas and the Villavicencia, Diego said, are very important roads: one (Villavicencia) reaches the neighboring province of La Meta and the other (La Caracas) connects to the center of the city. And anyway, he said, "We are not interested in making the state pay attention to us, to go begging for them to deliver us things that belong to us by right." In Diego's telling, the group was instead trying to impart another type of consciousness on the people, "to mobilize other things, other ideas, other thoughts," so that "the people could start to mobilize for themselves, not so that everything arrives for them. If the state is not doing it duty well, we are not going to go and do its work for it. We are going to take actions to supply our own needs." There are other bike collectives in the city, Diego noted, that work with state and with 'el instituto' (IDU), but RuedalaUsme "is not financed by anyone." In this way, he called for a much more defiant and place-focused public to be built around the self-sufficiency of cycling that is connected and responsive to, yet flourishing independently and in defiance of, the center.

What does 'democracy' mean?: the Metro

We have seen throughout the dissertation that Bogotanos have a habit of reading their political life together in and through the material logics and ebbs and flows of the traffic problem. We have seen that the traffic problem forces thought, compels remedial

action, creates antagonisms, challenge forth democratic engagement, and forces public reckonings in the space of everyday interaction. In this last vignette I would like to, then, make something explicit that has been implicit throughout: that the 'democratic question'—the problem of what it means for the people to govern; of who 'the people' are anyway if they indeed exist; of how and whether 'they' can achieve a legitimate collective will; and of how they might get their nominally democratic governments to advance it —in many ways *is* the mobility question. Or perhaps better put, the mobility question *is* the democratic one, or at least one of the most significant manifestations of it in contemporary Bogotá. While political philosophers like to debate democracy in the abstract; the 'democratic question' becomes real for publics via the issues that challenge forth the democratic process, broadly construed, and that force all the hidden obstacles and contradictions of self-governance as a political idea out into the light for debate.

I would also like to make a second thing explicit: that the movement from thought to action for democratic publics, provided the problematic situation is immediate enough to make that movement accessible, might be more fluid than contemporary democratic critics suggest. Jodi Dean (2009), for example, has critiqued public deliberation and internet-based deliberation in particular as directionless talk that detracts from the possibility of acting:

> Struggles on the Internet are able to reiterate and thereby displace political struggles in local and institutional settings precisely because these latter struggles are envisioned as communicative engagements…That they are aware of the problem, have an opinion, and make their opinion known doesn't mean they have developed the infrastructure necessary to write new legislation, garner support for it, and get it passed, much less carry out a revolution (p. 32).

While granting the point that talking about something is not the equivalent of acting efficaciously on it, we have seen through the preceding vignettes (and will see again in this one) that much conversation in the public sphere *does* move from talk to action. What is troubling about Dean's formulation (and about much democratic theory about the public sphere in general) is the imagination of deliberation as an 'opinion swap' rather than an as inter-subjective and exploratory working out of what the problem is, of who 'we' are in it, and of "what is to be done?," as the radio host asked all the way back at the beginning of Chapter 1. One wonders how a public is supposed to develop the 'infrastructure necessary' to tackle a problem, much less start a revolution, without circulating discourse about some things first (and along the way)?

From a pragmatic perspective Dean's logic runs backward. Dewey was very aware that the most dire problem that communities of the affected face is that there is a gap between the circumstances of their material involvement in issues and the skills, resources, vocabularies, and connections that effective action upon them would require. Yet for pragmatists, with the notable exception of much of what happens in the arena of academic philosophy and criticism (see Conclusion), words are *for* and *about* practice. In everyday life "our beliefs are really rules for action," as William James (1907/1995, p. 18) put it, and the public sphere is not 'all talk' as radical democratic critics commonly assert. We might instead expect the generation of public ideas to be positively correlated with the invention of novel practice. Bogotá's mobility public sphere, where there is fluid movement from the discursive arena to the embodied arena of circulation and back again, would seem to bear out Dewey's expansive sense of deliberation as an ongoing,

transformative practice. The death knell of democratic life, then, might not too much talking in public and on the internet but rather *no* talking, about problems or, through them, about democracy itself. It would mean that individuals are suffering their problems quietly, privately, without discovering one another or their (emergent) interests or having a sense of how to move forward together.

All of this—the confluence of traffic and democracy and the movement between discourse and practice—is born out in the drama around the metro. When I left Bogotá in the summer of 2015, I thought it was a propitious moment to be wrapping up this project: it seemed that after more than 50 years of politicians failing to deliver on promises Bogotanos were finally going to get their metro (subway). The looming 2016 mayoral election left some uncertainty, but the feeling among the various public functionaries I spoke with was that the contracting process and financial negotiations with the National Government (responsible by law to cover 70% of the Metro cost) had advanced far enough to 'lock in' its development. The Institute of Urban Development announced in bold print on their website that "The metro is no longer a dream, it is a reality for Bogotá" alongside a photo of President Juan Manuel Santos issuing Mayor Gustavo Petro a fake check. At a metro 'socialization' forum I attended on May 12, 2015 entitled Juntos Construimos el Metro (Together we Build the Metro) and hosted by the city government, there were still a lot of questions about what the long awaited system—"How will we guarantee that the elevators are only used for the handicapped?" "What about the valorization of land (around the metro)? How much will taxes go up for the 2s and 3s that are already struggling to make ends meet?" "Will there be a kid's car?"—but the general

tenor was celebratory. It seemed to be a done deal.

In the event, the process had not advanced far enough to be irreversible, and as I write today (April, 2017) the project is in limbo. This continues a long and tragic history. Colombian presidential candidates have been talking about the metro since 1930, and local candidates since at least 1988, or since they have been directly elected. Mayoral campaigns have embraced the promise of the metro as expeditious path to victory; in recent electoral history (especially in 2007 with Samuel Moreno, see Chapter 2) the politician who proclaimed most loudly and strongly that they would bring a metro has won, only to leave office having reneged on the promise. In the 2016 election cycle the same dynamic took shape but did not hold. Improbably, the left vote split among two strong metro supporters and Enrique Peñalosa was re-elected after nearly a decade of trying to win office again—a politician with deep personal, and many Bogotanos say financial, stakes in BRT as the best solution for Bogotá's mobility woes. Peñalosa had campaigned on delivering the metro, too, but in more muted tones. At the time of writing he was proposing to scrap the subterranean design that the public desired. His proposal was to create an above ground metro instead that would be much more economical but would also require starting over with 'new studies,' a painful proposition for many Bogotanos given that 'new studies' is something of a euphemism for 'never get the project done.' Since the 1950s the government has spent millions contracting study after study and never moving past the planning phase.

Perhaps because of this long history of deferred 'metro-mobilization,' in the public discourse in Bogotá I encountered many analogies between the metro and the

coming of genuine democracy. As the industrial designer-cum-mobility activist Carlos Carillo (2015) wrote in another blog essay that had viral moment, "Why will Bogotá not have a metro this time?," the delay of the metro marks a failure to execute the will of the people and to fulfill a past debt to them.

> [T]here has been a conspiracy between *tecnicos* and *politicos*, who for different reasons—some for political expediency, some for vanity, and some for conviction—have done the impossible: make it such that Bogotá does not have today not even one line of metro contrary to the popular will that has demanded the construction of the metro for decades…. Once again Enrique Peñalosa managed to destroy the metro despite our democracy, which is weak and corrupt but in the end a democracy, such that the approval of the citizenry is necessary on certain questions, and especially in sensitive issues such as the metro.

By the *tecnicos* and the *politicos* I took Carillo to be referring to the engineers at Los Andes and their close ties, especially, with Peñalosa and his administrations. With the question of the metro, in Carillo's blog post and elsewhere, the problem appears more explicitly in the public's deliberations: If and when the metro comes, will this mark the realization of democracy, our would it indicate its continuing deferral, or even its failure?

For those like Carillo who are convinced the metro and democracy are effectively synonymous, the actual functionality of the metro—the degree to which it will meaningfully alleviate the crush of congestion—has long been almost beside the point. It was all about symbolic and social value, dreams realized and dreams deferred, who would win and who would lose and what that would mean. As Carillo put it,

> There exists no other city the size and importance of Bogotá where the citizens can live their whole life without ever going underground into a metropolitan train. But the whole world knows what a metro is and considers it a good thing, despite the countless attempts to convince the city that the Metro is not indispensible, these strategies have not worked and the Metro has become almost a thing of honor. The people want it at any cost, little matter if it really works, if it is elevated or underground, devilishly expensive or not.

Indeed, at the Juntos Construimos el Metro forum it was notable that no one spoke even once about whether the metro would make traffic better. Rather, contention circled around its subterranean or 'superteranean' design, or more specifically about a plan that had circulated where the system would be below ground in the (wealthier) North and center and above ground at the two 'tails' in the peripheral areas and about what this would say about the equality of the people before the state. Contention circled around questions of capitalism and neoliberalism: as the most trenchant questioner at the forum put it, "How do we know this is for us as human beings? How to we keep this thing from being a trough at which the international corporations feed?"

In defending his proposal for an aboveground metro, the above/below debates and the class anxieties it indexed resurfaced, although Peñalosa gave them a new twist. He suggested in one interview that it was the rich of the city who are pushing for the underground metro, not because they wanted to use it, but because they wanted to "bury the poor underground"; Carillo responded in his post that Peñalosa's erroneous "populist logic" was an "insult to the intelligence of Bogotanos." And the 'populist' etiquette was hurled the other direction as well. Among the city's mobility experts and elites—the *tecnicos* that Carillo saw as in a cabal with the *politicos* to torpedo the metro—the metro was sometimes seen as the "tierra prometida" ('promised land') of duped people (Vergara, interview, November 4, 2014). The metro was not actually going to solve the mobility problem, experts pointed out, especially with just one, very expensive line. Moreover, since it is in the interest of the mayor in electoral politics to talk about the metro but never deliver it, the metro had become a manipulative tool of a pliable

electorate. If, at least in the one mainstream understanding of the term,[17] populism draws its strength from the confused and often opportunistic democratic promises of political elites, the very emotional popular enthusiasm for an always-deferred system appears as an argument against the capacity of the people to govern themselves effectively.

In other quarters the mobility public, I found cynicism about the democracy-infrastructure connection itself. This connection can be traced back to Peñalosa, the mayor who oversaw the construction of TransMilenio and the ciclorutas. In a democratic-theoretical iteration on the infrastructural fragmentation/integration problematic in urban design, Peñalosa liked to emphasize that bus and bicycle systems represented 'democracy in action' because they represented an egalitarian redistribution of the public right-of-way away from car users, who skew towards the wealthy (Soloman, 2008). As I noted in the Introduction, Peñalosa peddled a discourse wherein democracy could be inscribed in the form and material geometries of the city, repeating trademark *dichos* such as "make sidewalks as wide as you value citizens," and "buses represent democracy in action" because "a bus with 80 times more passengers has 80 more times right to road space than a car**"** (Walljaspar, 2010)

Yet among some *anti-Peñalosistas*, who skew towards the working class, the poor, and the left, I encountered a rejection of this definition and a conviction that democracy would be substantiated in other ways. As Manuela Barrera and several colleagues (Berrera et. al, 2015) wrote sardonically in the *Libre Pensador*, an online magazine, "Peñalosa focused on painting a good portrait of a city with freedom, equality

and democracy," but his many spatial and infrastructural projects did not necessarily materialize these values. As we bobbed and weaved through traffic on our bicycles one day as I shadowed her on her commute, Ana, a student at *La Universdad Nacional*, argued something similar, that infrastructure and public spaces were not the answer to mobility or to democracy. What matters, she thought, in democracy was social access to the systems and to the city, and that the metro would not solve that problem either. In this way, like the authors writing in *The Libre Pensador* ("The Free Thinker"), Ana participated in the circulation of counter-discourse that rejected Peñalosa's trademark public philosophy, whether applied to BRT or Metros.

Despite these counter discourses, metro supporters are gathering themselves to push out from the discursive sphere and toward collective action (see Figure 19).

Figure 13: Citizens gather in Suba to organize to revoke Mayor Peñalosa. Source: @unidosrevocamos Twitter feed, posted April 17, 2015

Pro-metro citizens have been planning events through social media sites and the #metroya (metro now) hashtag on Twitter. One strategy has been to link up with a growing movement to revoke Peñalosa called *Unidos Revocamos a Peñalosa* that unites

groups that have organized around a plethora of concrete urban problems. The group's website says that,

> We are more than 50 social and political organization that make up the Citizen Committee "Together we revoke Peñalosa" for the revocation of the Mayor of Bogotá. Indignant, excluded, affected and dissatisfied with their policies and initiative and changes to their government program, aware of the danger and risk that his continuance (as mayor) in this execution of his duties, and welcoming the general feeling of the *pueblo* for winning an administration that respects and keeps our rights in mind, we promote the revocation of the district president….

From among a hearty list of complaints, the group cited "the delay in the construction of the metro and its change from a underground to an elevated one" and Peñalosa's "obsession with continuing to fill the city with polluting TransMilenio buses, which undermines the finances of the city and excludes the 'small transporters' (los dueños from Chapter 2) and subjects them to misery."

Reading about these efforts from afar, I stumbled upon the name of Carlos Carillo once again. Recently it seemed that he had 'jumped off the page' to go from aggrieved blog writer to political organizer, joining up as a co-founder of *Unidos Revocamos a Peñalosa*. Carillo had written in his 2015 blog post that "democracy hinders megalomaniacal visionaries…But the citizenry exercise more and more control and the levels of disapproval of the mayor are reaching those of Timochenko." It is unclear what kind of success *Unidos Revocamos a Peñalosa* will have in disposing a democratically elected mayor, but they claim they have legal and constitutional foundation for their efforts. With time, they and the larger citizenry may indeed exercise more and more of that 'control,' whatever that means in practice and wherever they may take it.

Conclusion: making publics, making change?

Pragmatist publics come into being where problematic situations emerge to move strangers to search together for more satisfying environmental conditions and ways of living. Publics utilize circulatory apparatuses to realize themselves, inter-subjectively exploring the situations that affect them through discursive and extra-discursive practices. With luck, they discover concepts, practices and strategies for moving forward and reconstructing the troubling situation (Elridge, 1998). Because publics arise from and in response to issues that are qualified by the context in which they are experienced, this has the effect of producing multiple publics from a single issue. This is another way of saying what the political theorist Iris Marion Young (2011) has noted:

> City dwellers are thus together, bound to one another, in what should be and sometimes is a single polity. Their being together entails some common problems and common interests, but they do not create a community of shared final ends, or of mutual identification and reciprocity (p. 238).

We saw this phenomenon of a pluralistic public and differentiated togetherness across the vignettes of the mobility sphere above—in the emergence of the *colado* counterpublic, in the proliferation of interconnected-yet-differentiated *rodada* publics and counterpublics, in the difference of desires with respect to the metro. Moreover, while some of the communication that constitutes Bogotá's traffic publics happens 'face-to-face' in public space, the usual way of imagining the interactive character of democratic discourse—through metaphors of conversation, deliberating, debating—also breaks down in favor of "multigeneric lifeworlds organized by…potentially infinite axes of citation and characterization," as Warner (2002, p. 58) puts it, or as "issues being done in networks," in Marres' (2012) formulation.

Even among writers working in the pragmatist tradition, publics are frequently imagined in a functionalist way. By this I refer to the idea that the public sphere is an arena somehow incorporated 'from above' as part of a liberal-democratic institutional package for which it executes some prescribed function. Habermas (1969), for example, imagines the 'role' of publics as debating toward a rational consensus around an issue, while Marres (2007) sees it as framing issues for 'digestion' by the governmental apparatus and applying pressure on the state. Certainly it is true that laws and norms respecting free speech and assembly are pre-requisites for flourishing democratic publics, and to that extent the public sphere is semi-institutionalized. But for Dewey, publics emerge 'from below,' namely, from any disorderly, uncertain and stressful situation where people find themselves compelled to communicate in order to make their way forward together. Publics have no necessary relationship to the state and do not have a prescribed supporting role in the liberal-democratic machine. Dewey argued (1927) in the *Public and its Problems* that ossified state forms are in fact often the biggest impediments to publics' self-realization and that it would often be necessary for publics to dismantle the state to realize their emergent interests (although he recognized this was no easy task).

I have argued that Bogotá's mobility public sphere—or rather its radial spheres—are notably porous, differentiated, and action-oriented, as well as foundational to the emergence of organized interests and activist groups in what is sometimes called 'civil society.' With the proliferation of media types, forms and platforms, and with the lively exchange between embodied and discursive circulations across the urban expanse, there

is nothing keeping the boundaries of an elite public sphere sealed off from the myriad 'inputs' of 'the governed' (Chatterjee 2004). Little prevents 'the governed' from making their own counter-spheres and proposing alternative problematizations of traffic and forms of life as 'solutions' to it. Although Bogotá remains a very fragmented city, its circulatory infrastructures—especially as they combine into the (differentiated) mobility public sphere—have counter-fragmenting characteristics and potentialities: they force interaction across classes; create space for social visibility and communication among the working classes and the marginalized; and compel the elite center to at least to *reckon with* the contradictory place of peripheral subjects within the polity. In dismissing 'the' public sphere *tout court* or reiterating its limitations, geographies of urban democracy overlook these qualities and potentialities, as well as the fact that it takes a different shape every time and might always be constructed differently, more openly, and more radically.

CONCLUSION **Democracy, Pragmatism and Criticism**

On September 24, 2014, I spoke to Jorge Suarez by telephone from Bogotá. Suarez is a Bogotano now living in Sweden and working as Urban Transportation manager for Volvo. He specializes in Bus Rapid Transit. Like many Colombians, Suarez was inspired as a youth by Peñalosa's transportation innovations, especially TransMilenio, and he became interested in the traffic problem and public transportation; today there are a multitude of Colombians like Suarez occupying high-level positions in global transport planning and consulting at private firms like Volvo and in governmental institutions like the World Bank. Suarez and I had a wide-ranging conversation about Bogotá and mobility challenges in cities throughout the world. Yet one comment of his stuck out that I returned to later when I was trying to figure out what to make of all the straining and striving around mobility that I recorded in these pages as well as the fact that the traffic problem in Bogotá persisted despite these efforts.

Suarez told me that working in Bogotá was difficult for Volvo because of the instability of the political environment and volatility of the electoral process. This is another way of saying what I argued in Chapter 2: that building, maintaining and expanding infrastructure systems—especially transportation systems—requires social and political consensuses (or hegemonies, depending on how you look at it) that are not consolidated in Bogotá at this time. Yet despite the relative chaos of the present political moment, Suarez also insisted that Bogotá had a distinct advantage over many cities in the world simply for having *done things* about the traffic problem. "Whatever happens with BRT and the metro," he told me in English, "Bogotá is far ahead of many southeast Asian

cities, for example, because at least they have *something*, and so many cities have done basically nothing and are now 20 years behind. Bogotá has an infrastructure in place that can continue to be built upon. There is a knowledge base, a technological base, whereas other cities will be starting from zero."

Might the same be said of Bogotá democratically? Is it possible that by taking the traffic problem head on—by experimenting with various solutions and forms of mobile life, stepping back and evaluating and arguing over what has been done, and setting back out again—the city and its traffic public are building a kind of 'democratic base' upon which further growth can be constructed? Certainly Bogotanos are frustrated and disappointed by contemporary developments in traffic, and it may well be the "worst moment for mobility in Bogotá," as Dr. Eduardo Behrentz put it in the radio program with which Chapter 1 opened. But for it to be the 'worst moment' suggests, at the very least, that there have been better ones, that there has been a robust public discovery of the problem, and that the 'people of traffic' in Bogotá are now habituated to expecting, demanding and working for more. Indeed, several interviewees told me that the lasting legacy of the 'miracle years' of Bogotá's transportation-led turn-around, however exaggerated that miracle was, may be a collective realization that substantive change is within reach even if it has not been realized yet. The still unfolding traffic drama in Bogotá has produced a public education in the mobility problem—and through it, as I argued last chapter, in the democratic problem—as well as a community of impassioned and sometimes obsessive inquirers, many of whom will now accept nothing less than a democratic future in traffic, whatever that might mean.

In an imperfect and improvisational way, Bogotanos are stumbling toward a sense of what democracy in transit might look like, even if they are far from achieving it. It is a striking feature of Dewey's political thought to suggest that, ultimately, it is only the people who can produce a functional answer to the 'democratic question' by working precisely in this way. In the end, for Dewey, "the problem of justice, as the problems of freedom and democracy, cannot be 'solved' by 'experts' or by philosophers. They could only be solved—if that is still the right word—by people in the everyday world in their doings and sufferings" (Manicas, 1981, p. 289). It is by working experimentally on the problem (and not arguing from a priori principles) that the public can advance towards an organic sense of what democracy or justice might mean, and these have no meaning outside of the problematic situation that prompted the inquiry. 'Solution' is not the right word because of the forward-moving transactionality of the process: in the course of trying to learn from experience and to direct that learning to guide future experience, the public, the situation and the meaning of 'resolution' are continuously transformed.

Far from awaiting a neutral solution that would resolve the tension and make the problem disappear from awareness, my argument has been that the traffic problem in Bogotá has a perverse democratic value because it persists, insists, and evolves in public. It provides a spark, 'matter' and arena for the drama of urban democracy as the struggle of living together and the exploration of citizenship and collective futurity. Inclusive participation in precisely this kind of creative, contestatory, communicative, and reflexive reconstruction of the shared socio-environment is the form and meaning of democracy for Dewey. If Bogotá and Bogotanos are to make genuine progress in traffic, as I argued in

Chapter 2, it will likely have to happen by extending the application of democratic methods of participation, consultation, persuasion, negotiation, and cooperative intelligence to all corners of city and the whole community of the affected. In this way, Bogotanos might come to a sense of what just, inclusive and even inspirational forms of mobile life would look like and, in so doing, generate genuine agreement in mind and body for those ways of life.

Perhaps this sounds like naïve optimism, but Dewey (1916, 1934, 1988) always pointed out that the alternative to enlistment in the democratic project of producing auto-generated common goods was authoritarian and violent enforcement of schemes of shared living, whether perpetrated by the political right or by the political left. This is part of why he never bought into the idea of revolutionary violence as means to social progress even though he was a staunchly anti-capitalist:

> Authoritarian methods…come to us claiming to serve the ultimate ends of freedom by immediate, and allegedly temporary, techniques of suppression…Our first defense is to realize that democracy can be served only by the slow day-by-day adoption and contagious diffusion in every phase of common life of methods that are identical to the ends to be reached (1988, p. 368).

"Democratic ends," Dewey always insisted, "need democratic methods for their realization" (ibid). In ideal conception at least, democracy most nearly approaches the ideal of social organization in which the individual and society are organic to each other. In every other form of government, Dewey pointed out, individuals are not organs of the common will and are outside the political society in which they live. Not participating in the formation or expression of the common will, they cannot embody it in themselves.

Of course the traffic problem and the democratic life moving about it in Bogotá are far from egalitarian and inclusive. This is evident more than anywhere in the gender disparity that obtains in mobility leadership and in the democratic engagement I detailed in Chapter 3. The Bogotá public, moreover, is nowhere near taking collective control over the situation, and it is mired in deep disagreement among itself and with the state about what the problem is and what should be done. Yet my argument stands that the traffic situation energizes democratic process in a durable way and has a distinctly open quality. You cannot get the demos *out* of traffic, however much the Bogotá government sometimes might like to, and in that sense the public 'rules' it in a partial way and is actively seeking to expand that influence. Barnett and Bridge (2013) have argued that,

> The instrumental understanding of public formation as an engaged, embodied process of plural communicative transactions suggests that spaces in which different problems, different consequences, and different responses intersect might be thought of as having particular qualities of 'publicness,' in the sense of providing opportunities and imperatives for agonistic engagement with diverse effects and consequences (p. 1031).

Traffic, I have argued, is an example of this kind of conducive environment with a preternatural publicness. Much of liberal democratic theory imagines democracy as imposed 'from above' by regulations and institutions placed atop the social, but Dewey saw democracy as social force emergent in worldly situations. Liberal democratic institutions and their enabling philosophies followed in the wake of the democratic phenomenon in an effort to channel, consolidate and restrain it, but they did not create it. Thus while Dewey is traditionally considered a theorist of 'participatory democracy' in a liberal bent (Purcell, 2008), this half-truth misses the materialism of his democratic theory. The complex sociotechnical entanglements that characterize modern life, the

proliferation of problems and their publics, and the extension of communicative technologies across the globe have created a world that simmers with democratic potentiality. In some problematic situations more than others, that energy is irrepressible and it boils over. So it is—and so it seems it will remain—with traffic in Bogotá.

Criticism, scholarly affect, and practical knowledge

The question is seen to be just what it has always been empirically: What shall we do to make objects having value more secure in existence? (John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty,* 1929/1984, p. 43*)*.

As I noted in the introduction, I began this project with an ill-considered reluctance toward criticism. In casual terms, I did not want to 'talk shit' ('write shit'?) about Bogotá and its mobility situation and even felt a mild bodily revulsion at the thought of doing so, despite the fact that it would have been quite easy to identify and dissect any number of social and political 'bads' manifesting themselves in traffic in Bogotá. This reluctance stemmed from an uneasiness that slowly developed through the course of my graduate career with the geographical project of making critical knowledge. Again, this unease was more felt than conceptualized. It was only by journeying into pragmatic philosophy that I was able to give it a name and a conceptual frame. I discovered along the way that geographers like Ben Anderson (2016), Bruce Braun (2015), Derek McCormack (2013), Tara Woodyer and Hilary Geoghegan (2013), and J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006), among others**,** had also been subjecting critique to critical questioning, especially by thinking about the affective posture of the critical researcher and about what alternative, more 'affirmative' affective postures she might assume.

Pragmatic philosophy offers a unique perspective on these debates that focuses on what knowledge is and does, and I will conclude the dissertation by discussing this.

Pragmatism as a philosophy is hindered in the critical academy, I feel, by the popular usage of the term "pragmatic," which denotes a situation where we let go of higher ideals and 'satisfice' with what is immediately given; "dealing with things sensibly and realistically in a way that is based on practical rather than theoretical considerations" is how Merriam-Webster (2017) defines it. Yet outside of pragmatists' insistence that humans gain access to reason, action, and politics by confronting 'practical' obstacles to their flourishing in their immediate socio-environments, this definition has little relation to what the American pragmatists meant. As William James (1907) once wrote, "Pragmatism has no objection to abstractions so long as you can get about among particulars with their aid and they actually carry you somewhere" (p. 29). It is the 'carrying you somewhere' much more than the 'sensible realism' or the antipathy to theory that defines the pragmatic outlook. The central kernel of pragmatism, in my reading, is its insistence that practical knowledge is the most powerful kind of truth, and that what distinguishes practical knowledge from critical knowledge is that 1) it is prospective rather than retrospective (i.e. it points you forward toward your goals) and that 2) it is experimental rather than reflective (i.e. it is gained by actually meddling with material world in an effort to manifest something you desire).

Dewey thought that both philosophy and the critical social sciences lost their way when they stopped working practically/pragmatically, which is to say when they stopped focusing on identifying, experimenting with and securing valued forms of life and instead

turned to making 'correspondence' knowledge about what already was; wallowed in rationalistic pessimism; and/or set themselves to unmasking the 'deep truths' and structures of our social failures. What I want to suggest here is that this vision of a pragmatic social science in which we would identify, experiment with and secure valued forms of life is one way of saying what we might mean by 'affirmative critique.'

'Affirmative critique' is a research posture that has been proposed within and without critical geography as a remedy for what Latour (2004) has provocatively called the 'exhaustion' of the critical stance. As is obvious from the name, affirmative critique promises to unite two worlds. It would combine, on the one hand, a willingness to affirm things in the world and thereby counter what can be the relentless negativity of the critical posture; and, on the other hand, it would still bring the critical edge with which our discipline is so identified. The thesis I am pursuing in the following pages is that we have not actually arrived at a very satisfying sense of what we mean by 'affirmative critique' (or critique generally) and that pragmatism might offer a better meaning built upon the singular idea of how 'true' knowledge is both prospective and experimental.

Although the debate around critique and its discontents is rich and multi-faceted, it centers (in my reading) on the question of the effects of the knowledge geographers make. More specifically, there is worry that our critical practice might lead us to operate like 'wind-up' toys, as Latour (2004) memorably put it, that move perpetually through the same motions and unearth the same nefarious dynamics rumbling beneath the social geographies we investigate. In so doing, we may paradoxically shut down the power of

critical geography to positively inform the social and political transformations we are ostensibly working towards.

In a paper on the sub-discipline of environmental geography, Braun (2015) cites Michael Watts' *Silent Violence* (1983) as a paradigmatic example of the way the critical operation works in political ecology—a geographical subfield that, Braun notes, has critique "in its DNA."

> The task that the nascent field set was nothing short of unveiling the political and economic causes of environmental change and mapping their uneven effects. It sought to show not only how environmental change was political through and through, but that theories of 'ecoscarcity' and 'modernization,' and concepts and practices of 'bourgeois environmentalism' were themselves political insofar as they naturalized, and thus rendered invisible, a set of power relations and forces shaping environmental change (p. 102).

Silent Violence revealed that drought and famine in West Africa had causes that were social and political and were not simply the outcome of inadequate knowledge, too many people, or 'backward' technologies. From Watts' and others' explorations, Braun points out, a scholarly rhythm was modeled of unveiling the political and economic causes of environmental change and mapping their uneven social effects.

Geography's 'fixation,' as Tara Woodyer and Hilary Geoghegan (2013) put it, on the ethically and politically questionable character of social processes extends into critical urban geography as well. It is a field that often sets itself to unearthing the exclusions and marginalities of the city; the ways that policies enacted in the name of the 'common good' come to fail all those society has failed before; the way urban neoliberalisms in all their varieties leave trails of injustice and destitution in their wake;

and the bitter failures, contradictions and impossibilities of democracy as an urban governing ideal and institutional reality.

Now to be clear, this critical scholarship is vital to understanding the workings of the contemporary world and the point is not that we should dismiss it or stop making it altogether. My point is rather that it is both valuable and reasonable to ask—as geographers are doing by drawing on theorists such as Bruno Latour, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Jane Bennett, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick—what, if anything, has been lost along the way in the critical adventure. There seems to be some consensus that the primary casualty is social and political *possibility*. The critic who stands in judgment, the argument goes, cannot bring anything genuinely new or novel into the world and shuts down possibilities for knowing and composing the world otherwise.

In her well-known essay on 'paranoid critique,' which has been a touchtone in these conversations, Eve Sedgwick (2003) describes critique as a practice that seeks knowledge in the form of exposure—"exposure of powerful agents hidden in the dark acting always consistently, continuously, relentlessly… society, discourse, knowledge-slash-power, fields of forces, empires, capitalism" (p. 138). The problem for Sedgwick is that as we discover, over and over, the same deep causes that we set out assuming are operating beneath the surface, our growing paranoia prevents us from being surprised by the world or discovering any valuable existences or potentialities in it. Geographers Woodyer and Geoghegan extend this point in a 2013 paper, arguing that critique can result in a "dulling and deadening apprehension" of the world and can leave us "feeling helpless, depressed and defeated in the presence of unrelenting forces" (p. 196). In sum,

the problem with critique, or with 'critique-as-judgment' as Braun (2015) terms it, is that it places the researcher in an affective posture of cynical detachment and creates knowledges that, like Gibson-Graham (2006) have argued about our descriptions of the power of capital, "can have the paradoxical effect of strengthening the very thing described, to the point of rendering it omnipotent" (cited in Braun, 2015, p. 105).

To deal with the possible exhaustion of critique-as-the-unearthing of nefarious social processes, the same geographers—via the same social theorists—have called for engagements that would be more 'experimental,' 'inventive,' 'affirmative,' 'creative' and 'playful' (ibid, p. 103). As the debate is centered on the modalities of bodily engagement, we might think of geographers as introducing two alternative affective characters that are purported to embody either a "post-critical" or "affirmatively critical" attitude (and without necessarily distinguishing these two concepts). The first, the 'enthusiast,' does not hold herself in an attitude of disdainful judgment, but instead throws herself into the world and opens herself affirmatively to its immanent possibilities. For Geoghegan and Woodyer (2013), drawing on Jane Bennett, affirmation is about embodied 'enchantment'—an open, ready-to-be- surprised 'disposition' before, in, and with the world.

Ben Anderson (2016) theorizes a similar mode of what he labels 'affirmative criticism' that would "act in the midst of things coming to form," proceeding not through judgmental denunciation but rather by bringing "hidden, occulted, or foreclosed possibilities to life by multiplying, summoning, inventing" (p. 21). He quotes Foucault:

> I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism that would not try to judge but to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the

> grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply not judgments but signs of existence; it would summon them, drag from their sleep. Perhaps it would invent them sometimes—all the better. All the better (Foucault, 1997, p. 323; quoted in Anderson, 2016, p. 21-22).

Anderson's formulation, via Foucault, thus begins to bridge the figure of the 'enthusiast' with that of the second and related figure, the experimentalist. The experimentalist goes beyond a mere open and ready-to-be-surprised affective posture and actually reaches out and tinkers with the material world in order to compose new situations or "matters of concern" around which new forms of political life might gather or where new knowledges and social possibilities can be generated. A paradigmatic example in geography of this work is Sarah Whatmore's (2013; Whatmore & Landström, 2011) research on environmental competency groups, which experiments with assembling publics around the problem of flooding in the UK in order to enhance possibilities for democratic engagement. But we might think of any participatory action research as being experimental in the sense that the researcher rolls up her sleeves to intervene positively in the situation being studied rather than maintaining a detached and observant perspective.

At any rate, I believe the impulse to reign in critique-as-unearthing of nefarious social processes and to recalibrate critical (urban) geography towards a more affirmative and/or experimental posture is compelling in spirit. But my view is that aspiring toward a research practice that would be free of judgment is a misguided quest—and even more so when we call this judgment-free practice *critical* affirmation**.** The problem is this: is "criticism that would not try to judge," as Foucault put it, truly critical at all? Which part of "watching the grass grow, listening to the wind, catching the sea foam in the breeze and scattering it" is the 'critique' part? Is this not simply affirmation or appreciation? Do

we not need to be judging and *choosing* among the possibilities that we are releasing into the world via our more experimental and affirmative research postures?

What is needed is a model of what affirmative critique might mean that actually incorporates both sides of the term. The first step might be to liberate judgment from undue persecution via Dewey's pragmatist philosophy. In the final chapter of *Experience and Nature*, Dewey (1925/1981) takes on the question of what 'critique' means in what for him is typical fashion, by grounding it in everyday human experience. Criticism, he says,

> occurs whenever a moment is devoted to looking to see what sort of value is present; whenever instead of accepting a value-object wholeheartedly, being rapt by it, we raise even a shadow of a question as to its worth, or modify our sense of it by even passing estimate of its probable future (p. 299).

If we buy what Dewey is saying, criticism cannot be without judgment because criticism *is* judgment. We do not critique the wind by listening to it. We critique by stepping back from our raptness by the wind to consider, if only briefly, the quality it brings to our experience as well as the consequences it might have and the meaning of those for us. Critique always means evaluation and, importantly, this can refer both to moments of positive valuation and negative valuation.

From a pragmatic perspective, the problem with critique as geographers practice it is not that it incorporates a judgment function on the part of the researcher, but rather that critical scholars tend to go on knowledge adventures that explore the constitution of extant, disvalued social realities rather than the constitution of valued realities we would want to create. In this sense, and continuing the theme of caricatures, we might think of the pragmatic affirmative critic as akin to a prospector sifting piles of mud for nuggets of

gold. The prospector is on the hunt for value—that is, he is on an affirmative mission—but his practice is largely negative judgment: each shake of his pan is a critical one, and each granule of sand or dirt that falls out onto his feet is a value discarded. Affirmative critique, properly called, would not be satisfied to 'multiply signs of existence' or to simply release more potentialities into a world that, arguably, creates enough of its own. The aim of affirmative critique ought to be to foster *good*, desirable, functional existences that we have *judged* to be more desirable than other possibilities, and with which the affirmative critic therefore opts to throw her lot, for better or worse.

Pragmatic affirmative critique means attaching to real social possibilities and projects and trying to realize value in concrete situations. Pragmatic affirmative critique means building things. In Deweyan language, it is about 'securing objects of value' by 'making our desires more intelligent,' with 'making desire intelligent' another way of saying 'through the use of experimental methods.' Dewey quotes the pragmatist jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes on this point:

> 'There is every reason for trying to make our desires intelligent. The trouble is that our ideals for the most part are inarticulate, and that even if we have made them definite we have very little experimental knowledge of the way to bring them about.' And this effort to make our desires, our strivings, and our ideals…articulate, to define them (not in themselves which is impossible) in terms of inquiry into conditions and consequences is what I have called criticism (ibid, p. 312).

Here, then, we see pragmatist criticism in a fuller light as a knowledge-making enterprise. Criticism as a scholarly project involves not only stepping back from enjoyment in a singular, evaluative moment. It is a *process* in which we attempt to bring desirable realities into existence through experimental action in which we inevitably exercise

functions of both negative and positive judgment. Put in simple terms, the primary concern of the pragmatic critical enterprise is not to illuminate the inner workings of the 'bads' but, instead, to clarify, liberate and extend the 'goods' that inure, actually or virtually, in the social world as we live it now.

For Dewey, who advocated an experimental philosophical and social scientific practice, experimentation appears somewhat differently than it has in recent geographical conversations on critique. It is not a one-time event in which we reassemble socio-material situations in order to release novel possibilities. Experimentation happens in forward-moving transaction with the world. We identify a desirable existence or a potential solution to a problem; tinker with the world to try to initiate, amplify or redirect that value; step back and judge what we have done; adjust our ends and models according to what we learn about what is possible, efficacious, and righteous; and go back out and tinker again. The material world has its turn to 'critique' our efforts, but we the experimenters critique in turn. We judge back. Experimentation is continuous, transactional, reflexive evaluation. And this means, it must be noted, that an affirmatively critical adventure in knowledge building implies embodying at different moments *all* of the scholarly affects I mentioned before. In turns, we open ourselves to possibility (the enthusiast), tinker with the material environment (the experimentalist), step back skeptically to evaluate what has been achieved (the critic), and then head out again.

Through this method of experimental inquiry, which Dewey learned from studying the methods of the physical sciences, we make our desires more intelligent because we take abstract ideals 'down from the shelf' and work out what they mean in

the real situations of life—just as Bogotanos are doing with question of democracy in transit. A pragmatic affirmative critique would always be experimental because, from a pragmatic epistemological perspective, we cannot gain true knowledge of a desired object or value by just drawing it in our heads. "In outward forms," Dewey notes (1925/1981, p. 319), "experimental science is infinitely varied. In principle, it is simple. We know an object when we know how it is made, and we know how it is made in the degree in which we ourselves make it." To complete a thought about an object, we must actually try to make it real in the world and confront the practical obstacles that emerge to challenge its materialization, which are fully part of what the thing *is*. Importantly, this is as true of political values like democracy or justice or socialism that we critical geographers care about as it is of 'science-y' things like a pharmaceutical or a rocket. Ultimately all are made in the same way, experimentally. You cannot think them into existence.

In conclusion, what I am proposing is that the problem with critique is not that it judges. It is instead that by perpetually investigating the inner working of disvalued realities that critical geography goes wayward and is left on the sidelines of a compositional world-in-the-making. Tracing the deep causes of disvalued social realities, unearthing the hidden 'bad' beneath the seeming 'good,' delineating all the nefarious consequences: these are fine as far as they go. But they go precisely to the point of telling us all about what we do not want and little about what we *do* want and how to get it. The pragmatic perspective, which emphasizes learning through making, suggests that despite critical theory's insistence to the contrary, knowing why and how capitalism or liberal-democratic institutions fail us is not the same knowledge-adventure as the one that makes

our desires for equality, democracy, economic justice or whatever political value more intelligent. And the latter kind of knowledge-adventure is one feasible meaning of 'affirmative critique' that improves upon a definition that simply emphasizes embodied enthusiasm or openness.

My suspicion is that part of why critical geographers prefer postures of negative critique is that perfectionism and purism undergird the critical attitude. Part of the process of 'intelligizing' our political ideals is confronting the fact that they *are* ideals whose perfect beauty and wholeness will never belong to the material world. Forty years of negative critique has shown that operating politically on a global scale is very easy in thought but done with tremendous difficulty in life. In this sense negative critique, as Sedgwick (2003) reminds us, is oddly soothing in its assurance of certainty for the critic: she will always be right that everything is wrong. To experiment and double down optimistically on a project, solution, or possibility one has *chosen* despite its inevitable imperfection is inherently to risk disappointment, failure and—perhaps most difficult—the feeling our own smallness. A pragmatic mode of affirmative critique, if we were to practice it, would probably not be prospecting for gold at all, but rather for the good enough: for some nudge in a desirable direction or one tiny piece of the puzzle of what might make democracy or justice or equality happen on a small scale. In other words, the affective adjustment necessary to be critically affirmative might be less the one that renders us joyously open than one that adjusts us to the feeling of frustration and futility.

Thus far the pragmatic questioning of critique has remained on the side of the affective posture of the inquirer. We must also ask what critical knowledge does for the

'user' or 'consumer' of it. After all, as Sedgwick (2003) reminds us, the questioning of critique comes down to the issue of the performativity of knowledge: "What does knowledge *do*—the pursuit of it, the having and the exposing of it, the receiving again of knowledge of what one already knows? How, in short, is knowledge performative, and how best does one move among it causes and effects?" (p. 124). Critique as excavation of disvalued realities—critique as paranoia, as Sedgwick figures it,

> is characterized by placing, in practice, an extraordinary stress on the efficacy of the knowledge per se—knowledge in the form of exposure….The paranoid trust in exposure seemingly depends, in addition, on an infinite reservoir of naiveté in those who make up the audience for these unveilings…What is the basis for assuming that it will surprise or disturb, never mind motivate, anyone to learn that a given social manifestation is artificial, self-contradictory, imitative, phantasmatic, or even violent? That is to say, once again: for someone to have a demystified view of systematic oppression does not intrinsically or necessarily enjoin that person to any specific train of epistemological or narrative consequences (p. 138,141).

In Sedgwick's essay the knowledge project in question is the academic effort to understand whether the United States government conspired purposefully to spread AIDS among gay communities in the 1970s and 1980s. In this dissertation I have posed similar questions about a different knowledge project, that of unearthing the contradictions, impossibilities and aporias of democracy as a political ideal and political form.

Fraser (1990) has argued that there is a "great deal to object to in our 'actually existing democracy,' and [that] the project of a critical social theory of the limits of democracy in late capitalist societies remains as relevant as ever" (p. 56). She says that this project has in fact "acquired a new urgency at a time when 'liberal democracy' is being touted as the *ne plus ultra* of social systems for countries that are emerging from Soviet-style state socialism, Latin American military dictatorships, and southern African

regimes of racial domination" (ibid). Yet living and working in Bogotá 15 years after Fraser made these arguments, what I found was a widespread attachment to the ideal of democracy as some kind of egalitarian self-government paired with a general disaffection with, and un-mystified view of, democratic government as it was institutionalized and propagandized. In other words, literally nobody I met was duped by state rhetoric, and in such conditions it was far from clear what good it would do to produce an exposé of the failures of democracy in transit. Such in exposé might be 'true' in the sense of creating a believable picture of events, but where would such an analysis carry us?

Today we are used to the idea that knowledge is performative, even if we have a poor sense of *how* this is true and have not made much of an empirical question out of it. Pragmatism has a simple and elegant response to the problem of the performativity of knowledge that I think worth entertaining. Indeed, as Menand (1997) points out, the performativity of knowledge is actually the central preoccupation of pragmatist philosophy and the 'genetic' theory of truth its central idea. According to the genetic theory, ideas do not develop according to some inner logic of their own, but are entirely dependent, like germs, on their human carriers and on the environment. Knowledge does not correspond to external reality in the sense that it accesses some immutable essence 'out there' or creates a mirror image of it. Under pragmatism, 'truth' is assigned to beliefs that allow us to achieve what we want to accomplish. In this sense, it is always our own interests, values and purposes that help make truth, even when we understand ourselves to be making 'objective' knowledge that captures the reality of some thing or process.

As William James (1907/1995) put it, for pragmatists,

> truth means nothing but this: that ideas (which themselves are but parts of our experience) become true just in so far as they help us get into satisfactory relation with our experiences...[Truth means] any idea upon which we can ride so to speak; any idea that will carry us prosperously from one part of our experience to any other part (p. 23).

In a word, pragmatist truth is instrumental: true ideas emerge contingently in response to the needs of people as they live out their lives in a given place and time. Truth is something that *happens to* an idea when we can faithfully put it to work to accomplish that for which we strive. Thus "[p]urely objective truth, truth in whose establishment the function of giving human satisfaction in marrying previous parts of experience with newer parts played no role whatsoever, is nowhere to be found… The trail of the human serpent is all over everything" (p. 25). In our everyday lives we can readily recognize that the truest ideas, the most powerful ones, are those that we can deploy like recipes to guide purposeful action toward desired ends. Yet not recognizing this, the critical academy goes about rather unreflexively making correspondence knowledge that captures the world as it is—or rather as it *was*, since the sands are constantly shifting—in hopes that the having of this knowledge will change…something…somehow.

All of this does not mean that pragmatism proposes that we somehow *create* reality through our ideas about it, the notorious error of the discursive constructivism. It is instead that pragmatism turns the constructivism vs. empiricism debate on its head. It converts the notion of a static relation of 'correspondence' between our minds and reality that inheres in both theories into that of an active commerce between our thoughts and the world. Moreover, because knowledge grows 'genetically' through our attempts to push the world around (to circle back to the discussion of experimentation), it follows

that true knowers must be agents. In this way the ancient dualism between theory and practice is dissolved and the prospective part of practical knowledge (that true ideas take us towards our goals) melds indelibly with the experimental part (that testing out possibilities is how we come to know).

Let us return finally to the problem at hand: democratic theory in urban geography. There are multiple 'genetic lineages' or, as I prefer it, knowledge-adventures in the broad canon of democratic theory. What kind of knowledge-adventure about democracy is the most useful to undertake? Pragmatists insist that when we evaluate ideas, and especially when—as with democratic theory—there are competing theories of the same phenomenon, our first consideration ought to be whether they "lead us towards other moments which it will be worth while to have been led" (James, 1907, p. 79).

> Just as certain foods are not only agreeable to our taste, but good for our teeth, our stomach and our tissues; so certain ideas are not only agreeable to think about, or agreeable as supporting other ideas that we are fond of, but they are also helpful in life's practical struggles (ibid p. 30)

Through a pragmatic perspective, the anxiety in urban geography about the 'performativity' of post-political/post-democratic thought can thus be clarified. More than we ought to wring our hands about the whether the post-political inquirer will always find the same nefarious reality beneath, become detached from emancipatory possibility, or reify this disvalued reality with her paranoid descriptions of it, we ought to question where exactly she is riding this idea as she moves forward. Where is the post-political adventure headed, and is it a worthwhile place to go?

Certainly affirmative projects can be built entrepreneurially out of Rancière's ideas [see, for example, Routledge & Derickson's (2015) constructive take on 'the part

with no part' in their work on 'Situated Solidarities']. But if we are not careful we end up on a witch hunt like urban geographers Davidson and Iveson (2015b), who set themselves (via Rancière) to "identify some of the defining features of urban politics and then subject them to critical questioning: are they actually political?" (p. 543). To what end? We can easily find evidence to support a post-political thesis, and this thesis can easily buttress other ideas of which we are fond, but we are also liable to ride this idea straight off a cliff with respect to the question of practical action. Indeed, having looked down upon the whole urban scene and declared it a post-political mess, Swyngedouw (2011a) insists that the only option remaining for the radical left is to construct entities he calls "egalibertarian spaces" where true democratic acts might blossom. These are alien spatial forms, conceived entirely in thought, whose principle merit is that they would be untainted by all that now exists, but whose (much larger) downside is that no one, including Swyngedouw, has the least idea of how to make one or where to put it.

In this dissertation I have not produced experimental knowledge about urban democracy. But I did, through my aversion to critique, (somewhat inadvertently) produce what I can now name as prospective and affirmative knowledge. This is in the sense that I tried to describe conditions that render democratic life possible rather than focus on those conditions that impossibilize or shut it down. From a pragmatic perspective, a democratic theory that does not seek to guide democracy toward its fullest expression is not really a democratic theory at all. It is an anti-democratic theory, or perhaps a non-democratic theory. And while it's fine (although perhaps futile) to be anti-democratic today, it would be more practical for political theorists interested in other-than-democratic futures to

experiment with alternative political forms and their conditions of possibility than to publish tomes that detail all the ways democracy has failed. It is not that studying democracy's failure tells you nothing about how it might succeed, but pragmatism's distinctive epistemological lesson is that these are *not* the same knowledge-adventures.

It is the practical approach of figuring out what works that, in the last reading, is behind what is sometimes seen as Dewey's naïve optimism or 'hope' for democracy (see e.g. Lake, 2017). "What we call democracy," Isabelle Stengers (2005) has written,

> is either the least bad way of managing the human flock or a gamble focused on the question not of what humans are but what they are capable of. It's the question that John Dewey put at the center his life: how to favor democratic habits (p. 1001).

This is a true statement, but it also misses the practical impulse beneath Dewey's embrace of and 'gamble' on human democratic potential. For as I noted above Dewey saw already 85 years ago that publics would increasingly *try* to order their own affairs whether or not they were asked to, and that they would come to accept nothing less than their own self-government whatever the consequences. It is ultimately for un-romantic reasons, then, that thinking with Dewey pushes us to transform the critical social sciences from radiators of depressive, detached critique to centers for the discovery of our political capacities and of the environmental conditions in which they are realized. With Dewey we are pushed to ask: What *are* we capable of democratically? How are we free and what can we achieve with that freedom? How can the democratic forces extant in the world be marshaled toward desirable ends—ends we are willing to *choose* from other possibilities? And at what cost does the critical academy turn its back on such practical questions?

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